The Taliban strengthened their grip on Afghanistan, on 19 February, capturing the Province of Paktika, without resistance; this was welcomed by the local residents. Riding on tanks and armored vehicles, they drove into Paktika at dawn to a rousing reception by the residents.

President Rabbani's forces captured the river port city of Sher Khan Bandar from General Dostum's forces, Radio Kabul reported on 22 February.

The Taliban, on 25 February, whilst accusing President Rabbani and Masood of buying time to perpetuate their rule, threatened to oust them by force. The Taliban leaders vowed "in such a situation, when President Rabbani and Masood are avoiding talks to solve the crisis, we have no choice but to throw them out forcibly".

Maulavi Mohammad Omar, founder of the Taliban movement, accused President Rabbani of conspiring to foil the UN peace plan and prolong his rule. "We feel Rabbani would not agree to the transfer of power. He is avoiding implementation of Mehmood Mestiri's peace plan. In fact he is planning to fight the Taliban," he said. He also said that the Taliban are trying their utmost to resolve all issues, through negotiations and reconciliation. "Failure to do so would lead to difficulties and trigger fighting," he warned.

MARCH

The leader of Shi'ite faction of Hezb-i-Wahdat said on 5 March that the forces of President Rabbani were more of a military threat to them than the Taliban. "We have received reports that pro-Rabbani forces are bracing to attack us, but we have no concern about the Taliban" he added.

The famous mujahideen commander in Zabul Province, Mullah Salam Rocketi, surrendered his final stock of weapons, including four Stinger missiles, to the Taliban.

Afghan Defence Ministry sources said that fighting erupted in southwestern Afghanistan on 8 March between Government forces and the Taliban. The Taliban sources said that the attack was launched by Commander Ismail Khan in the town of Dilaram on the border of Farah and Nimroz Provinces, but was repulsed with the loss of a jet downed by Taliban anti air-craft fire. Some 75 troops either surrendered or were captured, along with their weapons and vehicles, to the Taliban.

A spokesman of the Taliban claimed that they had captured the strategic town of Dilaram in Farah Province along with 58 tanks and 103 other military vehicles. Other sources also reported that after fierce fighting between Taliban and Ismail Khan's forces, Dilaram had fallen to the Taliban and they were advancing towards Shindand air-base.

Amid fierce fighting between forces loyal to Ahmad Shah Masood and Hezb-i-Wahdat in Kabul, the Taliban launched an attack from Charasyab on 8 March.

A Defence Ministry source said, on 10 March, that the Taliban started fighting with the Shi'ite group around Darulaman Palace and the Russian Embassy in Kabul after Hezb-i-Wahdat refused to surrender their heavy weapons.

Troops loyal to President Rabbani made spectacular gains in Kabul on 11 March, breaking through positions held by the Taliban and Hezb-i-Wahdat forces. The ground troops, backed by tanks and artillery, broke through the lines in the southwest of the capital and advanced several kilometers capturing the former royal palace of Darulaman.

A Taliban leader, who was appointed as the new Governor of Khost Province, said on 14 March, that they had captured and disarmed about 1,000 Dostum militiamen around Kabul.

The Taliban on 15 March, launched a heavy attack from Maidan Shahr on Government forces in Paghman and surrounding areas. They captured some strategic areas of Paghman, but Government forces retaliated strongly and pushed them back.

Radio Kabul reported on 17 March that President Rabbani's forces captured the strategic positions of Darulaman, Rishkhor and Taj Beg hill in Kabul from the Taliban and killed 100 opposition forces.

Afghanistan's southwestern Province of Nimroz surrendered to the Taliban on 18 March. It was the tenth Province to fall to the Taliban group since it appeared in Afghanistan last October.

Several defeated Afghan mujahideen commanders held meetings in Quetta to plan a possible attack on the Taliban in the border town of Spin Boldak and elsewhere in Kandahar Province.

A Taliban spokesman said on 21 March that they had shot down a Government jet fighter during a bombing raid on their positions in Wardak. He also claimed that they had repulsed an attack by Rabbani's forces on Maidan Shahr.

The Taliban launched a successful counter-attack against President Rabbani's forces south of Kabul, as reported on 21 March. They recaptured some of the territory lost to Government forces recently. Government forces were pushed back 10 km from their frontline positions near the town of Mohammad Agha, some 35 km from the capital. However, next day, Government forces claimed that they had recaptured these positions.

APRIL

The four party alliance of opposition parties, Supreme Coordination Council (SCCIRA), appointed Sibghatullah Mujaddadi as the new head of the alliance replacing Gulbuddin Hekmatyar.

According to reports, Taliban launched a massive attack on the strategic Shindand air-base near Herat, controlled by the forces of Commander Ismail Khan; and captured two vital areas of Charband and Shos together with 30 personnel, four tanks and armoured vehicles. A spokesman for Taliban later, on 1 April, claimed to have repulsed a latest offensive by Rabbani forces in Mohammad Agha district in the southwest of Kabul.

After their retreat from Charasyab in Kabul, the Taliban, for the first time, launched a massive attack on Herat on 4 April and took control of the strategic Tappa district television. They also reportedly captured three districts Murghab, Shohra and Warsak of Badghis Province.

Fighting between the Taliban and Government forces intensified in the southwest of Kabul, particularly near Maidan Shahr and Arghandi posts. According to the Taliban's spokesman, during the 5 April encounter, about 100 troops of Rabbani and Masood were killed and 18 captured. Taliban also claimed to have taken a large number of weapons from Qala Haider and Arghandi post.

A spokesman of the Taliban claimed that after a struggle of almost six weeks, they took complete control of Badghis Province and the town of Torghundi, on 7 April, which would be a launching pad for future attacks on Herat.

A spokesman of Commander Ismail Khan claimed that the Taliban had retreated from Shindand air-base with more than 80 men dead and hundreds wounded; following three days of bloody clashes with forces loyal to him.

According to latest reports the Taliban, despite reinforcements, were again beaten back by Commander Ismail Khan's forces after what was said to be the severest battle for the Shindand area.

The Taliban received a boost when a powerful commander, Maulavi Siddiqullah, who commands strategic bases near Pul-e-Charkhi on the outskirts of Kabul, announced his support for them.

A Taliban spokesman claimed that their forces had captured some important posts near Herat. "The Taliban also shot down a fighter of Ismail Khan and narrowed the siege of the Shindand air-base".

Commander Ismail Khan's forces pushed the Taliban some 60 km back following massive air and ground attacks leaving more than 100 Taliban dead and the same number wounded.

MAY

A high level delegation of the Nangarhar Shura headed by Fazle Haq Mujahid proceeded to Kandahar and held talks with the Taliban to seek their support; however, the delegation could not achieve the desired results. The Taliban leadership advised the delegation to see Maulavi Ehsanullah, Governor of Khost Province, who had been assigned the task of dealing with Jalalabad related issues. According to some Afghan sources, the Nangarhar shura had also sent another delegation to Kabul to win the assurances from President Rabbani not to attack Nangarhar.

A Defence Ministry spokesman in Kabul said that President Rabbani's forces following three days of intense air attacks, launched a ground offensive on 8 May against the Taliban near Maidan Shahr.

The Taliban claimed to have captured half of Ghor Province and their troops were now only 12 km from Ghor's capital, Chagheheran. The Taliban spokesman also claimed to have shot down a Government helicopter in Arghandi, near Kabul on 7 May.

Officials in Kabul, claimed on 13 May that forces loyal to President Rabbani had made advances against the Taliban. He did not identify the areas reportedly seized; however, Kabul Radio said their forces had cleared Farah Province of the Taliban and that they were moving towards Dilaram and Zaranj in neighboring Nimroz Province.

Afghan Government sources reported that their troops had recaptured a key town on 15 May and driven the Taliban from their last stronghold in Nimroz Province. However, the Taliban spokesman in Peshawar denied the fall of Nimroz saying Government sources were resorting to propaganda. Meanwhile, the Taliban admitted that Farah was captured by Government forces but they strongly denied the arrest of the Governor of Farah Province.

President Rabbani's forces penetrated into Ghor Province on 16 May and captured the main centre of the Taliban in Dehak area.

Forces loyal to President Rabbani captured a strategic position near Kabul from the Taliban on 21 May. Presidential forces claimed that they went through Taliban lines and took Kotal-e-Takht hill, 35 km south of Kabul. The Government victory followed an intensive land and air offensive near the town of Maidan Shahr.

JUNE

Fighting was spreading in different parts of Afghanistan in the wake of reports that the Taliban and Hezb-i-Islami (Hekmatyar) had joined hands against President Rabbani. In an interview in Jalalabad, Hekmatyar said his party and four party alliance (SCCIRA), were ready to join hands with the Taliban against President Rabbani's Government. "We have no objections towards an alliance with the Taliban. The Taliban had some reservations with regard to the presence of General Dostum's Junbesh-e-Milli in SCCIRA. We hope any hurdle in the formation of our alliance would be removed", he further explained.

The Taliban launched a new offensive against Government forces near Mohammad Agha, south of Kabul, resulting in the deaths of 23 persons, Radio Kabul reported on 3 June. In a separate report, it said that 10 Dostum's fighters were killed on 2 June and further 12 injured in fighting against pro-Rabbani forces in Dara Souf, in northern Samangan Province.

According to Radio Kabul, forces loyal to President Rabbani, on 5 June, repulsed an attack launched by General Dostum's forces in Samangan Province, killing 16 people, including a general.

President Rabbani's forces and the Taliban agreed on a 10-day ceasefire (9 June) to hold peace talks. The truce was arranged by a leader of Pakistan's Jamiat Ulema-i-Islami who held meetings with both sides in Kabul and Logar.

President Rabbani's forces, on 13 June, heavily bombed the Taliban's positions in Dilaram, western Afghanistan, thus breaching a 10-day truce which had come into effect only four days earlier. " We tried our best to hold the cease-fire, but Rabbani's forces violated it by bombing our positions in Dilaram" a Taliban spokesman stated.

Fierce clashes took place in northern Afghanistan between forces loyal to President Rabbani and General Dostum. Government forces made some territorial gains in Sangcharak district of Jawzjan province. Officials in Kabul claimed on 15 June, that five attacks by Dostum's forces were beaten back in Aliabad district in Kunduz Province.

A spokesmen of the Taliban said on 16 June that Hezb-i-Islami commanders, controlling the town of Pull Chotu, about 5 miles from the Pakistan border, had surrendered to the Taliban after the fall of Helmand Province. But, later, two commanders again took over the town on the occasion of Eid-ul-Azha. The Taliban once again attacked their positions on 16 June and recaptured the town.

In a joint operation the forces of President Rabbani and Akbari's Hezb-i-Wahdat Islami on 20 June recaptured Bamyan in central Afghanistan by defeating Khalili's Hezb-i-Wahdat, after three days of fierce fighting.

The Taliban refused to extend their ten-day cease-fire with the Rabbani Government, accusing it of violations and the bombing of Taliban positions in south-western Afghanistan.

JULY

VOA reported, on 8 July, that the Afghan Government and the Taliban exchanged prisoners of war. The Government released 700 Taliban and the Taliban freed 300 men of President Rabbani.

The First Secretary of the Afghan Consulate in Peshawar, returned from Kabul, where he had met Masood and other high-ranking officials. According to him, Commander Ahmad Shah Masood said the Afghan Government would continue to maintain its political and military hold and fully resist all opposition groups. The influential commander urged rival parties to give up, what he called, their struggle for the "vested interests of foreign countries" and asked them to return to their homeland and sincerely strive for the welfare of the Afghan nation.

President Rabbani's forces, on 13 July, claimed that they had taken control of Yakaolang district, Bamyan Province; but there was still some resistance from Hezb-i-Wahdat forces in nearby positions.

Fighting broke out between President Rabbani's troops and forces of General Dostum in Badghis Province. A military spokesman of Ismail Khan said on 19 July "this morning we started our clean-up operations against the enemy who have occupied Morghab".

Hezb-i-Wahdat sources claimed that after fierce fighting, they recaptured Bamyan Province from Government forces on 23 July.

AUGUST

The Taliban reiterated, on 6 August, that they still intended to use military force to remove President Rabbani from power. According to the Taliban's spokesman, the Taliban have eight operational jet fighters based in Kandahar and ample fuel stocks in underground airport bunkers.

Using their air power for the first time, the Taliban forced two Boeing cargo planes of Ariana and Tatar airlines to land at Kandahar on 3 August. Both planes were on their way from Dubai to Kabul when intercepted in Kandahar air space. The Taliban sources claimed that a huge quantity of arms and ammunition had been recovered from the Tatar airliner (Albanian), including some three million kalashinkov rounds and spare parts for other weapons. The sources recalled that the Taliban had earlier warned aircraft not to overfly their territory.

Forces loyal to President Rabbani claimed on 8 August that they repulsed two attacks by General Dostum forces battling to seize control of the strategic Salang tunnel in north Afghanistan. A pro-Rabbani frontline commander said that three rival faction gunmen were captured alive and two others killed in a night ambush in the mountains over-looking the Salang highway.

According to reports on 25 August, fierce fighting was going on between President Rabbani's troops and forces of Hezb-i-Islami around the Sarobi area, some 76 km east of Kabul. Both sides were making claims of their advances in the fighting.

Afghan Defence Ministry spokesman, Dr. Abdullah, said on 25 August, that Government forces after capturing Dilaram district in Farah Province, advanced eastward along the main southern national highway to the outskirts of Greshk in Helmand Province.

According to a senior official in Kabul, the Taliban staged a counter-attack on 27 August to frustrate the current offensive by advancing infantry loyal to President Rabbani.

The Taliban forces in a counter attack on 28 August recaptured the strategically important town of Greshk in Helmand Province. It was partially captured by forces loyal to President Rabbani three days previously. People travelling in the area said they had seen at least 200 of President Rabbani's troops held prisoner by the Taliban. A spokesman for the Afghan Defence Ministry later admitted the defeat and said their forces were being reorganized for another assault on Greshk.

General Dostum's spokesman in Islamabad claimed that their jet fighters on 29 August bombed Bagram airbase, in which three Afghan Government war planes were destroyed.

According to reports on 29 August, fighting which had started some five days earlier, continued around Sarobi, still under the control of the Hezb-i-Islami. Kabul-based journalists who attempted to visit the frontline also came under artillery bombardment. During this barrage, one pro-Rabbani fighter was shot down; and the windscreen of a journalist's jeep smashed when a piece of shrapnel went through it. The Kabul-Jalalabad highway is still closed to traffic.

SEPTEMBER

The Taliban sources in Peshawar said that after fierce fighting, troops loyal to President Rabbani were forced to retreat from Farah Rud, an important district connecting Farah with Nimroz Province. At least 450 Government troops were killed in the fighting.

After a week-long intense fighting, Farah Province was recaptured by the Taliban from President Rabbani's forces. Kabul Defence Ministry said, on 31 August, that the Taliban had also pushed President Rabbani's troops out of Helmand Province. Later on 2 September, forces loyal to President Rabbani received a serious set-back as the Taliban recaptured Nimroz Province.

A Defence Ministry spokesman in Kabul said that the Taliban had launched a midnight offensive on Government positions at Arghandi, some 35 km west of the capital. Government jets pushed the Taliban back after two hours fighting.

A spokesman of Hezb-i-Islami (Hekmatyar) claimed that they were advancing towards the eastern part of Kabul after capturing Mahipar district, adjacent to Sarobi.

The Taliban captured Shindand military base, the second largest airbase in Afghanistan some 50 miles south of Herat City, on 3 September, dealing a major blow to the forces of President Rabbani. Reports added that some 2500 troops of Ahmad Shah Masood had been airlifted to Herat in military planes to help the Governor of Herat, Ismail Khan, counter the Taliban who had made a series of fresh military gains.

The Taliban scored one of their biggest military victories in Afghanistan on 5 September by capturing the strategic city of Herat. Herat's fall was a major blow for President Rabbani's Government. While confirming Herat's fall, the Afghan Government blamed Pakistan for backing the Taliban in their recent wave of military gains.

The Taliban completely ousted pro-Rabbani forces from South-Western Afghanistan by capturing Ghor province on 6 September. The Taliban now controlled 14 out of 32 provinces in Afghanistan.

The Taliban fighters and forces loyal to President Rabbani are poised for a final showdown for Kabul with both sides strengthening their frontlines. Following a Taliban warning to President Rabbani that he should either surrender or fight, the Kabul defenders strengthened positions in Arghandi where Taliban fighters were positioned in the heights of Kotal-e-Takht overlooking positions of Rabbani's troops.

OCTOBER

According to the official spokesman of the Defence Ministry in Kabul, fighting was going on west of Kabul (in Sanglakh area) between the Taliban and a Shi'ite faction loyal to President Rabbani for four consecutive days. A senior military official in Kabul said on 1 October that the Government had sent reinforcements to Sanglakh, where fighting was continuing.

The Taliban, on 1 October, launched attacks against Government forces from their Maidan Shahr base, some 40 km south west of Kabul and captured 30 strategic military posts around Paghman.

A Defence Ministry spokesman in Kabul claimed, on 3 October, that Government forces had captured a strategic city, Sangcharak, in northern Jawzjan Province. He also reported the capture of 25 heavy weapons of different types, two tanks and several ammunition depots.

The Taliban refused to accept Mehmood Mestiri's proposal for a 10-day ceasefire, saying it would provide an opportunity for President Rabbani's regime to prolong its stay in power.

In a major development the Taliban on 9 October said that they were ready to release all Hezb-i-Wahdat prisoners and appoint a commission to probe the killing of Abdul Ali Mazari.

Taliban jet-fighters for the first time bombed Government positions north of Kabul in Paghman area on 10 October.

In the wake of the Taliban's massive preparation for a final assault on Kabul, President Rabbani has deployed *Luna* missiles in Koh-i-Safi to target the opposition's positions in Maidan Shahr and Mohammad Agha area.

The Taliban were poised for an attack on Kabul after the nearby strategic town of Charasyab, 25 km south of Kabul, was taken by the Taliban in a sudden assault overnight on 10 October.

According to a Defence Ministry spokesman in Kabul, Government's forces launched a counter-attack against the Taliban in south Kabul late on 12 October. "We have captured Khairabad hills and Rishkhor on one front and several mountain peaks on another" he further added.

The Taliban on 14 October claimed more military gains west of Kabul despite fierce air raids and artillery shelling by President Rabbani's forces defending Kabul City. A Taliban spokesman in Peshawar said they had captured Qala Haider Khan, district centre of Paghman, the Scud missile base and Commander Sher Alam's position west of Kabul.

A Taliban spokesman claimed, in Peshawar, that they had retaken control of Islam Qala, a border town with Iran, which he acknowledged had been seized by pro-Rabbani forces two days before, after launching an attack from Iranian territory. He said at least 70 government troops had been killed and 50 others made prisoner during the offensive. "We have also seized eight vehicles, with Iranian number plates", he also added.

Afghan Presidential forces lost the key city of Bamyan on 15 October. The Government officials admitted that the central city of Bamyan had fallen into the hands of the Shi'ite faction Hezb-i-Wahdat, led by Karim Khalili; but added that President Rabbani's forces had regained some lost ground, moving back into the neighboring locality of Yakaolang.

About 6,000 fresh Taliban fighters reached the frontlines on 18 October to take part in a decisive push into Kabul. Flying the white Taliban flags and listening to revolutionary Islamic poetry from tape-recorders, the Taliban entrenched in frontline positions on Khairabad hills and said they were waiting for a signal from their central Shura to march on Kabul.

After the capture of Bamyan, Hezb-i-Wahdat said on 19 October that its forces were engaged in fierce fighting with Ahmad Shah Masood's forces in Parwan Province. "We have dislodged the Government forces from several strategic posts in Parwan", it added. Hezb-i-Wahdat also claimed the capture of Shibar, Sheikh Ali, Surkh-e-Parsa and Doaba, Ghorband district in Parwan.

Government forces launched a counter attack on 24 October on Taliban positions in Bini Hisar, south-west of Kabul. The attack was, however, repulsed and the Taliban were able to hold on to their positions.

The Taliban fired a barrage of rockets at Kabul airport for a second straight day on 25 October causing minor damage but no casualties. The ICRC aircraft taxiing for take off narrowly escaped the attack.

Defence Ministry sources said in Kabul that Government forces, on 26 October, fought off a Taliban air attack on a military base west of Kabul and repelled two major ground assaults by the Taliban in the capital's suburbs.

After a rocket attack on Kabul airport Afghan President Rabbani, on 27 October, renewed the efforts to stop the Taliban from attacking the city areas. On the other side, some 2,000 more Taliban reached the outskirts of Kabul to reinforce their colleagues preparing for a final assault on the capital.

NOVEMBER

The Taliban dispelled the impression that they had reached an agreement with the Coordination Council and Jalalabad Jehadi Shura for the transfer of power in Afghanistan.

Taliban jets bombed Bagram airbase on 10 November and severely damaged it. According to a spokesman of the Taliban, three MIG jets flying from Kandahar participated in the raid.

Defence Ministry sources in Kabul said that Afghan Government troops, on 12 November, pushed the Taliban back on a frontline west of Kabul. "Our forces have captured over twenty posts from the Taliban" he further added. In a separate operation, Government forces captured some 10 small villages near Maidan Shahr, Radio Kabul reported.

The Taliban made a major advance against Afghan Government troops on the sixth day of fierce fighting between the two sides, south-east of Kabul on 23 November. They seized about 10 km and took the villages of Chakari, Khurd Kabul and Band-i-Ghazi.

According to reports, the Taliban captured the strategically important Pul-e-Charkhi in the east of Kabul on 22 November and, hence, effectively took control of the only eastern supply route for the Kabul city.

The Taliban have freed 79 POWs captured by them in the recent fighting in Herat. They were released in a public ceremony in Herat on 22 November.

Defence officials in Kabul said, on 25 November, that Government forces had recaptured three strategic mountain posts from the Taliban, as the battle for control of the east of Kabul raged on. The posts are located near the Taliban-held Butkhak and Band-i-Ghazi area.

Former Afghan President and leader of the Afghan National Liberation Front (ANLF), Sibghatullah Mujaddadi, on 27 November, quit the four-party anti-Rabbani alliance of the Supreme Coordination Council of Islamic Revolution of Afghanistan (SCCIRA) and resigned as head of the alliance.

The Afghan Government troops, on 29 November, recaptured 20 km of lost ground (Butkhak, Pul-e-Charkhi, Band-e-Ghazi, and Khurd Kabul) from the Taliban southeast of Kabul in a spectacular advance which reversed nearly two weeks of government setbacks.

DECEMBER

Fresh fighting flared up on 3 December on the frontline at Rishkhor and on the nearby Khairabad hills in Kabul. During the night, the Government used jet planes to bomb the Taliban positions at their stronghold in Charasyab. Defence sources in Kabul said that on 4 December, the Government troops captured a strategic mountain post south of Kabul from the Taliban in which 10 of the Taliban were killed.

The Government troops and the Taliban exchanged fire of heavy weapons near Kabul. Reports also add that the Government jet planes, on 9 December, bombed the Taliban positions on this frontline, just 5 km from Kabul's southern suburbs.

General Dostum's Junbish-i-Milli has claimed that the whole of Darra-i-Souf in Samangan Province in northern Afghanistan had fallen with the decision of 16 pro-Rabbani commanders to surrender to the Junbish-i-Milli forces.

Commander Ahmad Shah Masood, through a letter, has suggested to the Hezb-i-Islami (Hekmatyar) to forget the past clashes and join hands to rebuild a consensus to resolve the Afghan problem.

BBC radio reported on 16 December that the Taliban and Supreme Coordination Council (anti-Rabbani coalition) signed an agreement to jointly attack Kabul. A Taliban delegation reached Kandahar to discuss the agreement with the party leadership before its formal announcement.

According to reports, the government forces began a counter offensive on 19 December with the help of artillery, tanks, and rockets to recapture the lost territory and remove the Taliban from Khairabad hills south of Kabul. Defence ministry sources in Kabul said they had captured a few military outposts but the battle had left an unknown number of dead and dozens of civilians wounded or homeless. General Dostum's forces attacked government positions early in the morning of 19 December. A government source said, "General Dostum's forces launched an attack on our positions, but after three hours of fighting they suffered many casualties".

A leader of the Taliban, on 22 December, claimed they had shot down a jet-fighter of President Rabbani, near Kolangar in Logar Province south of Kabul. He denied Kabul's claim that the plane crashed due to technical reasons.

Hezb-i-Islami sources confirmed that the two rival parties, Hezb-i-Islami of Hekmatyar and Jamiat-i-Islami of President Rabbani, opened power sharing dialogue in Sarobi on 28 December. The two close allies of Hezb-i-Islami, Junbish-i-Milli of Dostum and Hezb-i-Wahdat are also involved in the proposal offered by President Rabbani to Hekmatyar to share power in Kabul.

President Rabbani has asked the opposition parties to hold dialogue with the Government on the future set up of the country. He also expressed his willingness to visit Kandahar and Mazar-i-Sharif to meet the Taliban leadership and General Dostum.

AID AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENTS

JANUARY

A convoy of trucks from ICRC carrying 120 MT of mixed food supplies, the first delivery of 1995, arrived in Kabul on 8 January. According to the Red Cross Relief Coordinator, this food was distributed to displaced people living in public places.

A 37-truck UN relief convoy carrying 420 MT of wheat, medicines and materials arrived in the snowy capital, Kabul, on 19 January. Reports added that at least seven trucks of wheat-flour were looted in the Sarobi area. Another convoy carrying 500 MT of WFP food commodities, left for Jalalabad to be distributed for the displaced people.

FEBRUARY

After the Taliban (Islamic religious students) took control of Maidan Shahr, the road was opened again to traffic, following the long blockade. More than 30 trucks carrying cooking oil and wheat flour reached Kabul from Kandahar on 11 February.

The Canadian High Commission announced that the Government of Canada through the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) contributed an additional Rs.22 million towards international relief efforts, in support of the people of Afghanistan.

MARCH

The British Minister for Overseas Development, Baroness Chalker, announced that Britain was to give 7,200 MT of wheat for Afghanistan. The new aid, worth Rs. 64 million, was to support food aid programmes, benefitting some 400,000 people in Afghanistan.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) evacuated its personnel from Kabul on 9 March in the wake of incessant heavy fighting between Hezb-i-Wahdat and President Rabbani's forces. However, it was said that UNDP would maintain its presence in Kabul through local staff. Meanwhile, the ICRC Deputy Delegate said that ICRC would not evacuate its staff from Kabul and would continue to perform its duties under all circumstances.

Afghanistan and the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine in England, signed a document in Jalalabad, Nangarhar Province, to develop a human resource capacity for the health sector.

The Iranian Government said, that from 21 March, it would not renew temporary resident permits for almost half a million Afghan refugees - they would have the option to either return home or be transferred to refugee camps.

United Nations in an emergency appeal sought the contribution of international donors to meet the most urgent humanitarian needs of the people of Afghanistan. Martin Barber, Acting Director of UNOCHA, said on 27 March in Islamabad, that the UN required immediate funding together with 18,000 MT of wheat and related transport costs, to meet the most urgent needs.

POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

JANUARY

According to Afghan sources, President Rabbani, in a message to the UN Special Envoy, Mehmood Mestiri, requested him that since the Afghan problem including the process of transfer of power was a complicated one and needed equal cooperation from all concerned quarters, therefore, the OIC and other friendly countries should also be invited for future dialogue in Kabul.

Mehmood Mestiri, arrived in Kabul on the first day of the new year (1995) with a new peace formula, expressed the hope, on 2 January, that President Rabbani would hand over power in Afghanistan to a temporary administration within seven to ten days. He said that he presented a proposal to President Rabbani, for the handing over of power which was accepted in principle but the UN was awaiting for the final approval of the Afghan Government.

According to a press release issued by the Afghan embassy in Islamabad, President Rabbani, during a meeting with Mehmood Mestiri, expressed satisfaction over the efforts being made by him, aimed at a solution of the issues and restoring peace in Afghanistan.

Mehmood Mestiri, and US ambassador in Pakistan, John Monjo, flew to Jalalabad on 4 January to meet Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. Mehmood Mestiri, inaugurated the UN office in Jalalabad, which is to be the "UN secretary General's office in Afghanistan".

Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, after a meeting with Mehmood Mestiri, on 5 January, described his talks with Mehmood Mestiri as "very successful" and said that the two of them had agreed on a 'new mechanism' to effect transfer of power from President Rabbani to an interim set up. Mehmood Mestiri shared Hekmatyar's optimism by terming the talks as very fruitful.

Chief of Hezb-i-Islami, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, told VOA in an interview in Jalalabad that he endorsed any movement launched in the nation's interest and for the solution of the country's problems. However, any movements imposed from outside the country could further worsen and complicate the problem, he added.

According to officials in Kabul, an Islamic delegation from Sudan was meeting the leaders of warring Afghan factions to secure a peace settlement; meanwhile UN special envoy Mehmood Mestiri was continuing his peace mission independently.

According to Radio Kabul, a three-member peace delegation of President Rabbani held its first face-to-face meeting with the opposition leader, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, at his Charasyab headquarters south of Kabul on 10 January.

President Rabbani announced on 10 January that he would hand over power to a 23-member council as proposed in the UN peace plane brought by Mehmood Mestiri. He envisaged this as the future set up of the Afghan Government.

Charles Santos, an aide to Mehmood Mestiri on political affairs, visited Kandahar on 11 January to meet the Taliban leadership and discuss the prevailing situation in Afghanistan.

Mehmood Mestiri and his political adviser held discussions with several Afghan leaders in Peshawar on 21 January, on the mechanism for transfer of power from President Rabbani to an interim government for a period of six months.

Chief of Hezb-e-Islami, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar said on 23 January that he was ready to cooperate with the UN but President Rabbani should get ready to accept an interim Government. He further added that if the ongoing efforts did not succeed in restoring peace in the country, his coalition would form an interim Government by itself.

Political advisor of Mehmood Mestiri, Charles Santos, held talks with the Afghan leaders about the mechanism for the transfer of power.

Supporting the UN peace mission and expressing his willingness to step down from power, President Rabbani proposed a six-point formula for the transfer of power resolve the Afghan problem.

Sotirios Mousouris, the UN Secretary General's former special envoy for Afghanistan mentioned that mere transfer of power in Afghanistan would not achieve much. There was a need to devise a package envisaging the formation of a neutral Afghan force that could guarantee the survival of the transitional Government.

FEBRUARY

The Ambassador of France in Islamabad, on behalf of the EU member countries, said on 1 February, that the European Union was paying special attention to the situation in Afghanistan. He expressed the support for the UN peace process and asked all Afghans to uphold a lasting ceasefire.

Mehmood Mestiri met a delegation of the Supreme Coordination Council (anti-Rabbani coalition) in Islamabad on 2 February. They discussed the proposed names for the future interim set-up and the mechanism for the transfer of power from President Rabbani.

Reports said, on 7 February, that Mehmood Mestiri had a two-hour meeting with the Taliban leaders in Kandahar and discussed the issue of the transfer of power with them. The Taliban leaders while announcing support for the UN peace efforts appealed to Mehmood Mestiri to continue his efforts.

UN official Charles Santos, announced in Islamabad on 11 February that the mechanism for a peaceful transfer by President Rabbani would be ready by 20 February and the President would step down between 20 and 22 February.

Mehmood Mestiri said in Islamabad on 14 February that the Special Mission's work had entered into an important phase in which it was working with all sides to agree, by 18 February, to a peaceful transfer of power. He left Islamabad for Kabul on 17 February to bring a logical conclusion to the process for transfer of power in war shattered Afghanistan.

The UN peace plan for Afghanistan came under threat on 18 February as the Taliban took up positions outside Kabul and demanded the control of security in Kabul before being willing to join the process. Mehmood Mestiri, after a meeting with the Taliban, said that they insisted on a neutral security force before the transfer of power could take place to a proposed interim council. He also added that, in addition to the issue of Kabul security, the Taliban were also demanding that the mechanism be made up of "good muslims" and that there be one representative from each Province of Afghanistan.

Reports on 20 February indicated that Hezb-i-Islami of Maulavi Younus Khalis refused to sit in the interim council - "Mestiri plan's current mechanism for the transfer of power was aimed at the establishment of a non-Islamic Government in Kabul. Therefore, our representative cannot sit in the interim set-up" he stated.

A special UN delegation and leaders of Taliban met in Charasyab, south of Kabul, but failed to agree on conditions for the movements's role in the Afghan peace "mechanism". The Taliban commander said "We told the UN, if you meet our conditions. your process will succeed".

Hezb-i-Wahdat sources said, on 20 February, that they were close to an agreement to avoid confrontation with the Taliban.

Mehmood Mestiri, after the failure of his mechanism for the transfer of power in Afghanistan, returned to Islamabad from Kabul on 21 February. He told a group of journalists that the formula he had sponsored earlier for the transfer of power was already over and that he was working on another formula for the restoration of peace and transfer of power in Afghanistan.

Mehmood Mestiri in a news conference in Kabul on 22 February said that the UN arranged transfer of power, expected to take place that week, had been postponed to March 21. He added that President Rabbani has agreed to resign on that date.

An Afghan official said, on 23 February, that the new March 21 deadline, for President Rabbani to cede power to the UN sponsored Council, would have to be extended if the political and social conditions in the country warranted it.

A presidential spokesman in Kabul said, on 24 February, that President Rabbani was ready to share power with the Taliban, but only recognized a symbolic authority in his former opponents. He added "the Taliban are the side, which we should have to deal with, as they are the side with power."

President Rabbani, in an interview with the BBC in Kabul, said that his military commanders had helped the Taliban. He did not elaborate as to what assistance had been provided to the Taliban.

John Parker, a representative of the Narcotics Affairs Bureau in the US embassy said, on 26 February, that senior officials from the American DEA (Drug Enforcement Agency) would meet the Taliban in Helmand Province soon and discuss with them matters pertaining to poppy cultivation inside Afghanistan and the issue of heroin manufacturing laboratories.

Commander Ahmad Shah Masood held crucial talks with a Taliban leader near Kabul on 27 February, but failed to reach agreement. The Taliban leader Maulavi Mohammad Rabbani said that the Government delegation was determined to keep its arms. "Taliban, during the meeting, categorically asked Ahmad Shah Masood to lay down their heavy arms failing which Kabul would be invaded by the Taliban," he added.

MARCH

Taliban leaders, in a meeting with a 4-member working group of the United Nations on Afghanistan, held in Kandahar on 1 March, told the UN that they would never join any Government set-up with the Afghan mujahideen parties. They insisted that President Rabbani must hand over the security of Kabul to them.

The head of the leadership Council of the Taliban, in an interview with the BBC in Kandahar, repeated the Taliban's rejection on the UN plan for an interim Council to govern the country in the run-up to free elections. He added that he did not believe the UN could bring peace to Afghanistan and that the only way forward for the UN was to declare support for the Taliban.

Maulana Fazlur Rehman, who was invited by President Rabbani to use his close ties with the Taliban to prevail upon them to reach an understanding with the Government, reached Kabul on 8 March.

UN sources reported on 10 March that Mehmood Mestiri arrived back in Islamabad to resume his uphill task of brokering a peace in Afghanistan.

An important faction, Harakat-i-Inqilab-i-Islami Afghanistan (HIIA) withdrew its support for the Afghan President Rabbani's Government and extended full support to Taliban on 13 March. The Afghan Chief Justice, a deputy Prime Minister, three Ministers and two deputy judges of the Supreme Court of Kabul, all belonging to HIIA, also resigned from the Government. The HIIA asked President Rabbani to hand over Kabul's security to the Taliban.

The US State Department spokeswoman, Christine Shelly, said on 10 March, that the US continues to urge all sides in the ongoing Afghan civil war to cooperate fully with UN efforts to begin a peaceful transition process in Afghanistan.

About 15,000 Afghan refugees living in Jarmai refugee camp in Kohat, demanded that the United Nations declare its support for the Taliban for restoration of peace in Afghanistan.

Afghan President Rabbani, arrived to Pakistan to attend the ECO summit that began in on 14 March in Islamabad. Talking to newsmen, he said that his Defence Minister, Ahmad Shah Masood had decided to crush all opposition forces posing danger to Kabul's security. On 15 March, he held extensive talks with Pakistan's Prime Minister on the situation in Afghanistan.

President Rabbani's Special Envoy in Pakistan said that the President would not step down on 21 March. On the other hand, Mehmood Mestiri said on 17 March that President Rabbani would transfer power to an 80-member "national council" within 15 days.

A senior Defence Ministry official General Younus Qanooni, on 27 March, accused Pakistan and other unnamed foreign nations of covertly supporting the Taliban movement.

The Afghan Presidential spokesman, Aziz Murad, reported that the Government was planning to change nearly all Ministers in the Cabinet very soon.

APRIL

The Supreme Coordination Council which met in Mazar-i-Sharif, Afghanistan, on 1 April, backed the UN peace efforts for resolving the Afghan conflict but said that the proposed interim council meeting for the transfer of power be held outside Kabul to avoid undue pressure from the Kabul administration.

Hezb-i-Islami leader Gulbuddin Hekmatyar called for the formation of a national peace force to launch an offensive against those opposing the return of normalcy to Afghanistan.

A delegation of the Nangarhar Shura went to Kabul and held talks with President Rabbani's Government to find ways to resolve the Afghan problem and effect transfer of power in Kabul.

According to sources, Hezb-i-Islami Afghanistan (Hekmatyar) had certain reservations about the new mechanism proposed by UN envoy Mehmood Mestiri, but the party had decided to go ahead with the plan with some modifications.

Hezb-i-Wahdat in a meeting in Mazar-i-Sharif elected Mohammad Karim Khalili as their new leader. He succeeded Abdul Ali Mazari, who was killed whilst in the custody of Taliban last month.

Three leading Afghan leaders held talks for several days in the border town of Jalalabad to reach a compromise about the future of Afghanistan. The moderate Afghan leader, Pir Syed Ahmad Gailani, joined Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and Maulavi Mohammad Younus Khalis in Jalalabad to discuss the situation.

The UN warned President Rabbani that it would stop recognizing him as the President if he continued to delay the transfer of power. Mehmood Mestiri, Head of the Special Mission for Afghanistan, in an interview, said that the world body would snap its links with the Rabbani Government if it continued to defy pleas for a peaceful transfer of power in Kabul. On 5 April, the Afghan Government said it was disappointed and surprised over the UN warning.

The Director of the Office of Secretary General in Afghanistan and Pakistan (OSGAP), Francis Okelo, said on 7 April that a committee comprising experienced Afghan commanders and leaders will soon submit a detailed report to Mehmood Mestiri containing recommendations for the establishment of a national security force. The national security force would be responsible for maintenance of law and order in Afghanistan.

A team of Pakistan-based diplomats and UN officials flew to Kabul on 8 April for a one-day fact-finding mission. A UN spokesman said the visit was unofficial, and that the diplomats - representing

the European Union, the UK, the United States, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, the Netherlands and Japan - visited some UN humanitarian projects.

Two Afghan leaders, Chief of the National Islamic Front of Afghanistan, Pir Syed Ahmad Gailani and Chief of Harakat-i-Islami, Sheikh Aseff Mohseni, decided to initiate mediation amongst the rival factions to bring peace to Afghanistan. They arrived in the border town of Jalalabad along with high ranking leaders of their parties. Before leaving for Jalalabad, Pir Gailani held a detailed meeting with leader of Harakat-i-Inqilab-i-Islami, Maulavi Mohammad Nabi Mohammadi, in Peshawar. After holding talks with Eng.Gulbuddin Hekmatyar in Jalalabad, he returned to Peshawar.

A 10-member delegation from Nangarhar Province left for Kandahar to convince Taliban leaders to resolve the Afghan conflict through peaceful and political ways. Similarly, the Nangarhar Shura also decided to send another delegation to Kabul to hold talks with President Rabbani, Ustad Sayyaf and Ahmad Shah Masood.

Eng. Gulbuddin Hekmatyar lashed out at the United Nations, saying its peace efforts were a failure, and blamed the international body for exacerbating factional fighting. "The UN plan is a failed attempt which further complicated the issue" he told AFP on 19 April. Meanwhile, the OSGAP Director, Francis Okelo, said that they did not equate difficulties on the path to peace as failures. He stressed that despite setbacks and complications, the UN had not and would not give up on its task to mediate a lasting peace and help establish an acceptable Government for all Afghans.

A spokesman for the Taliban responding to the former Afghan President Mujaddadi's proposal for an alliance, pointed out that if he was interested in making an alliance with the Taliban, he must sever his links with the communists who were responsible for the massive bloodshed of Afghans.

According to Taliban sources, after successful negotiations between the ulema from the northern Provinces of Afghanistan with chief of the Taliban, Maulavi Mohammad Omer, about 300 personnel of Dostum militia were released on 26 April. They were captured by the Taliban during the recent fighting near Kabul.

Moderate Afghan leader and NIFA chief, Pir Sayed Ahmad Gailani, left Peshawar for Jalalabad on 30 April in order to resume mediation between President Rabbani and his rival Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. He held detailed negotiations with Hekmatyar; and Maulavi Younus Khalis would proceed to Kabul for further talks with President Rabbani, Professor Sayyaf, Ahmad Shah Masood and others.

MAY

An Afghan Government delegation headed by Dr. Abdul Rahman was in Moscow for talks on trade and to discuss the possible induction of General Dostum, into the Rabbani Government. According to an official of the Afghan Foreign Ministry, this was the second visit of Dr. Abdul Rahman to Moscow for talks with Russian leaders. He said the Afghan Government wanted to extend its authority to other Provinces; therefore, the talks have been initiated. Kabul believed that Moscow can persuade Dostum to join the Rabbani Government.

The Afghan Foreign Ministry said on 2 May that the Indian embassy in Kabul would be re-opened shortly. The Indian mission in Kabul was shut in January 1994 amid factional fighting.

A peace mission led by Dr. Farooq Azam arrived in Peshawar; after holding talks with Taliban and mujahideen leaders to find a political solution to the Afghan dispute. The mission had left for Kandahar after holding talks with Maulavi Younus Khalis, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, and members of the Nangarhar Shura in Jalalabad and Maulavi Ehsanullah of the Taliban in Khost Province; as well as Maulavi Jalaluddin Haqqani.

A team of Indian officials began talks with the Afghan authorities on 3 May to prepare for the reopening of their Embassy in Kabul.

Pakistan's Foreign Office sources said that Pakistan reopened its mission in Kabul on 3 May and its Ambassador reached Kabul along with 30 diplomatic staff.

A two member senior American diplomatic team visited Kabul on 4 May to assess the situation in the Afghan capital with respect to rehabilitation of the war-ravaged capital.

According to the BBC, a Government spokesman in Kabul confirmed that the Afghan Government was holding talks for reconciliation with General Dostum. Other reports said that they agreed on holding talks in Uzbekistan through the mediation efforts of Russia. Dostum's spokesman in Moscow stated categorically that they were invited by the Russian authorities to hold talks with the Afghan Government and resolve the differences in a peaceful manner.

In a bid to form a joint front against an expected onslaught by Government forces, the Taliban had reportedly formed an alliance with Hekmatyar's Hezb-i-Islami in Logar Province and agreed to give due share to the latter in any administrative set up in the area. The Taliban sources in Peshawar maintained silence and expressed their ignorance about the latest development. Hezb-i-Islami sources, however, said that different rounds of talks had been held between the Taliban and Hezb-i-Islami both in Quetta and Kandahar on forming an alliance, but they did not confirm reports that any coalition had been agreed upon by the two sides in Logar. They did not rule out the possibility of forming a joint front against President Rabbani.

Chief of National Islamic Front of Afghanistan, Pir Sayed Ahmad Gailani, on 18 May, left Islamabad for Mazar-i-Sharif on a UN plane to discuss the current situation of Afghanistan with General Dostum. He is struggling for mediation amongst the Afghan leadership for an early negotiated settlement to the Afghan conflict.

Reacting to reported moves by Afghan President Rabbani to replace a number of cabinet members and high ranking officials with his own men, the Supreme Coordination Council termed the replacements as illegal and unacceptable to both the Council and people.

According to reports, Russia, the European Community and the UN have sent their delegations to Kabul to review the situation for reopening diplomatic missions in the Afghan capital.

A four-member Commission was formed on 22 May to find a political settlement to the Afghan conflict. The Commission, formed at a meeting in Peshawar, was convened by Maulavi Mohammad Nabi Mohammadi, leader of Harakat-i-Inqilab-i-Islami. Two representatives of each of the mujahideen parties except Jamiat-i-Islami of President Rabbani were invited.

A top ranking official of the Afghan government, Dr. Abdul Rahman and head of the Foreign Relations Department of Junbish-e-Milli, started talks in Tashkent to bridge the differences between the two sides. Reports said that the talks ended without reaching any decision.

The Afghan Government expressed its willingness to end hostilities with General Dostum. The Afghan Presidential spokesman said on 27 May that fighting could end if Dostum ceased his "rebellion against the Islamic State of Afghanistan. Since currently inclinations are seen on the part of Dostum to give up his rebellion, the state will not therefore be prone to fight them any longer".

A spokesman of the Taliban on May 30 warned of renewed fighting in the near future and asked the foreign countries not to reopen embassies in Kabul.

JUNE

The Taliban strongly condemned the interference of Russia and India in the internal affairs of Afghanistan and alleged they were making conspiracies to block the way for the establishment of an Islamic system in Afghanistan.

The US ambassador to Pakistan, John Monjo, accompanied by a few American diplomats flew to Jalalabad on 1 June and held a meeting with Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. A number of issues concerning Afghanistan and the UN peace process were discussed during the meeting.

The US ambassador to Pakistan, John C. Monjo, with three other American officials went to Kabul on 6 June and held detailed talks with senior Afghan Government officials including President Rabbani. The US delegation made it clear to President Rabbani that the involvement of the UN was the best way to help resolve the Afghan crisis. Reopening of the US embassy also came under discussion.

A three member delegation of the Commonwealth of Independent States went to Kabul on 7 June for talks with the Afghan government to help resolve the Tajikistan crisis.

The Afghan Deputy Foreign Minister accused the United Nations mission of not being impartial in its talks with different warring groups. He said the UN special mission in Afghanistan had shown a bias towards the Taliban; and Mehmood Mestiri, himself, had supported the Taliban, Voice of America quoted on 9 June.

The Afghan Government, on 11 June, released six prisoners of the Taliban. The prisoners were released "unconditionally" a Government official said, expressing hope that the Taliban would also reciprocate the "gesture of goodwill." On 12 June the Taliban released eight prisoners of President Rabbani's forces.

The OIC Secretary General, on 12 June, dispatched his personal representative, Ibrahim Bakr, to Afghanistan to meet Afghan leaders in Islamabad, Peshawar, Jalalabad, and Kabul to discuss new peace initiatives.

The Afghan Government on 14 June released another five Taliban Prisoners of War (PoWs) under the agreement reached between the two sides.

The Afghan mujahideen parties leaders' moot which was scheduled in Jalalabad for 15 June could not begin due to the absence of some Afghan leaders (President Rabbani and his ally Professor Sayyaf). It was rescheduled to be started on 22 June but for second-ranking leaders of the parties and the Taliban.

The Afghan Foreign Minister, Najibullah Lafrai, in his visit to Iran, lambasted UN role in bringing peace to Afghanistan and transfer of power to a neutral interim set-up. Speaking in Tehran he said that no role was left for the UN special envoy, Mehmood Mestiri, in Afghan affairs. Mestiri, he said, has lost the confidence of the Afghan people due to his (Mestiri) inclination to a particular group. He accused Mestiri of not playing an impartial role in Afghan peace settlement process.

The Secretary General of OIC, Dr. Hamid Al-Ghabid, on 22 June, met with Masood Khalili, advisor to President Rabbani, in Jeddah. The Afghan envoy communicated a verbal message from President Rabbani to the OIC Secretary General emphasizing the importance which the Afghan political forces attached to the role of the OIC in the quest for a long-lasting solution to the Afghan crisis.

The Afghan Foreign Minister, Najibullah Lafrai, said that soon an Islamic system, on the pattern of that enforced in Iran, would be established in Afghanistan. In an interview, published in the Tehran-based Kayhan International, Lafrai said the Kabul government would ensure that the Shi'ite community be given its due rights and fair representation in the political setup of Afghanistan.

The firstever visit by a representative of former Afghan king Zahir Shah to Pakistan from 29 June raised expectations among the war-weary Afghan people about a solution of the Afghan problem.

JULY

Sardar Abdul Wali, special envoy and son-in-law of the former Afghan King Mohammad Zahir Shah, arrived in Islamabad on 29 June to negotiate with various Afghan groups about the current situation in Afghanistan. He held talks with Pakistan's Prime Minister, Benazir Bhutto, on 1 July and met President, Farooq Ahmad Khan Laghari, on 2 July.

The Afghan Government, on 1 July, lodged a strong protest with the Pakistan embassy in Kabul against what it said was Pakistan Foreign Minister, Sardar Aseff Ali's "irresponsible" statement against Afghanistan and Sardar Abdul Wali's presence in Pakistan. The Afghan Government strongly denied the statement in which it was said that India and Russia were providing assistance to the Afghan Government. The Afghan Embassy in Islamabad also lodged an official protest with Pakistan's Foreign Ministry against Sardar Aseff Ali's remarks and the presence of Sardar Abdul Wali in Pakistan.

A two-member party delegation of Pakistan's Jamaat-e-Islami went to Kabul, at the invitation of President Rabbani, to hold negotiations with various Afghan groups.

A senior official of the Afghan Foreign Ministry said, on 3 July, that the former Afghan King Zahir Shah, who had lived in exile in Italy for the past 22 years, had no place in current Afghan politics. "Among the common people of Afghanistan the King has no place anymore. As an Afghan individual Zahir Shah is welcomed to come and live in Afghanistan again - but not as King" he further added.

The special envoy of former Afghan King Zahir Shah said on 3 July that an emergency meeting of an Afghan Loya Jirga ought to be convened to sort out the lingering crisis in Afghanistan. "The idea of an emergency Loya Jirga has been set forth by His Majesty (Zahir Shah) for the last few years and Afghans supported it to a great extent" he added.

A high-level delegation of the Pakistan Government left Islamabad for Kabul on 3 July for talks with the Afghan Government to remove the increasingly disturbing signs in relations between the two countries.

Sardar Abdul Wali, met the US Ambassador to Pakistan in Islamabad on 4 July and discussed with him peace prospects in Afghanistan. He also met former Afghan President, Sibghatullah Mujaddadi, and discussed the Rome proposal with him. Later, on 5 July, he met the representatives of the OIC in Islamabad and discussed the current Afghan crisis.

A high level delegation from Saudi Arabia headed by the Deputy Chief of the Intelligence force, Ahmad Mohammad, held detailed meetings with leaders of various Afghan factions in Kabul, Mazar-i-Sharif, Herat, Kandahar and Jalalabad in a bid to bring warring factions round the table. While unveiling his peace plan, Ahmad Mohammad said that they were working for the formation of a Council of representatives of all 32 Provinces of Afghanistan.

According to VOA, the US Ambassador to Pakistan, John C. Monjo, flew to Herat on 10 July and held discussions on the peace prospects in Afghanistan with Governor Ismail Khan.

Pakistan's Foreign Minister, Sardar Aseff Ahmad Ali, called on Sardar Abdul Wali on 11 July and discussed the latest developments in Afghanistan with him.

Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's Hezb-i-Islami, after concluding a three-day shura meeting, expressed outrage over ex-king Zahir Shah and Sardar Abdul Wali's peace plan; and declared on 15 July that it did not want a "royal Government" but an Islamic one in Afghanistan. The Shura also proposed formation of a Loya Jirga to help resolve the crisis.

Head of the UN Special Mission to Afghanistan, Mehmood Mestiri, arrived in Islamabad, on 18 July, to resume his peace mission in Afghanistan. Soon after his arrival, Mestiri held a meeting with OIC Ambassador Ahmad Ansaay and exchanged views on Afghanistan. He went to Jalalabad on 19 July and held talks with various Afghan leaders including Haji Abdul Qadeer, Governor of Nangarhar,

APRIL

The British Government announced it was to provide Pounds Sterling 300,000 as emergency aid from the Overseas Development Administration's emergency relief fund. The aid would be channelled through UNOCHA to support its mine clearance programme.

UNOCHA opened a new demining training camp in Jalalabad, following the closure of its demining camp near Peshawar, which was established in 1989. A total of 13,000 Afghans have received basic demining instruction from 77 foreign military experts at this training camp over the past years.

According to a UN report released in Islamabad, work had been started on the restoration of water supply to eastern districts of Kabul which would encourage resettlement of some 20,000 displaced families. It added that humanitarian assistance and mine clearing programmes were in full swing; and also stated that a convoy of 17 UN trucks carrying 195 MT of wheat, 30 MT of pulses and 30 MT of sugar arrived in Kabul.

Director of Afghan Technical Consultant (ATC), a mine clearance organization funded by the UN and European Union, said that a team led by a British expert hired by ATC started its demining operations in Kabul University on 6 April. It would carry out its work in Darulaman, Ghazi Stadium, Jada-e-Maiwand, and Bibi Mahro.

A press release issued by the Saudi Red Crescent Society (SRCS) said that in connection with the mass immunization campaign, about 51,217 Afghan refugee children were vaccinated against polio in Afghan refugee camps in various parts of the NWFP.

Dr. Briosa E. Gala, Secretary of State for Cooperation of Portugal, handed over a cheque of US$ 10,000 to Martin Barber, UN Coordinator for the Emergency Humanitarian Programme for Afghanistan, on 17 April. This money was to support work being undertaken to protect Afghanistan's cultural heritage (remaining collection of the Kabul museum).

The Taliban said on 23 April, that they were blocking fuel supplies to Kabul. A Taliban commander said that "by order of our leaders we have banned the transport of fuel to Kabul in order to put pressure on the other side, but there was no blockade on foodstuff".

WHO, UNICEF, and the Afghan Ministry of Public Health (MOPH) started a mass campaign against polio throughout the country and more than 2 million children were to be vaccinated.

MAY

A senior Iranian official said on 2 May that Iran would begin that week to repatriate 400,000 Afghan refugees who had fled the violence in Afghanistan. The temporary residence permits of un-married refugees would be canceled and they would be handed travel cards giving them 15 days to leave Iran. In subsequent stages, married refugees and Afghans married to Iranians would also be repatriated.

Afghanistan's Governor to the Asian Development Bank (ADB), in his speech on the closing day of the three-day annual ADB meeting in Auckland, New Zealand on 5 May, appealed for the

members of the Nangarhar Shura and a delegation of the anti-Rabbani Coordination Council. He also went to Kabul and met President Rabbani on 21 July. After that meeting, he said that he had not brought any peace plan but had come to meet and listen to Afghans on how to resolve the Afghan problem. Mestiri condemned foreign interference in Afghanistan's internal affairs, but said some Afghans were also to blame for encouraging it.

Sardar Abdul Wali, said on 18 July, that there was no difference in the peace formulas of Zahir Shah and Mehmood Mestiri. He said Mestiri met Zahir Shah in Rome and both were of similar views on Afghanistan.

President Rabbani, in a meeting with Mehmood Mestiri, offered his own peace formula which considered only the representation of Afghan intellectuals. The plan called for the setting up of a commission, comprising representatives from all Afghan universities, the High Court and scientific academies in Kabul. Meanwhile, Hezb-i-Islami (Hekmatyar) rejected the formula and said that the plan was aimed to delay further the transfer of power.

Mehmood Mestiri, met Gulbuddin Hekmatyar on 27 July in Parachinar and discussed with him the prevailing situation in Afghanistan. Hekmatyar assured Mestiri of his continued support for the peace efforts and responded positively to the idea of convening a Loya Jirga.

AUGUST

Head of the National Islamic Front of Afghanistan, Pir Sayed Ahmad Gailani, called on Pakistan's Foreign Minister on 1 August and exchanged views about the situation in Afghanistan. The various proposals of the UN, the OIC and others for peace and reconciliation in Afghanistan were also discussed during the meeting.

Pakistan's Foreign Minister, Sardar Aseff Ali, went to Kabul on 3 August and held talks with the Afghan Foreign Minister, Dr. Najibullah Lafrai, as well as the Ministers for Public Health and Planning. He also met the Chief of Ittehad-i-Islami Professor Sayyaf. Later on 4 August, he held talks with President Rabbani in which they agreed to set up a joint commission to address any irritants in their political, cultural, and technological cooperation. Sardar Aseff Ali also met Ahmad Shah Masood and the Caretaker Prime Minister, Ahmad Shah Ahmadzai. On 5 August, he went to Kandahar and held talks with the Taliban leaders. Sardar Aseff Ali then went to Herat on 7 August and discussed the developments in Afghanistan.

The OIC Secretary General, Dr. Hamid Al-Ghabid, after receiving the preliminary report of the OIC mission on Afghanistan, headed by Ambassador Ahmad Engin Anasy, said that at the preparatory meeting to be held in Jeddah it was expected that a "real Afghan plan" would be evolved. The Jeddah meeting would provide an opportunity for Afghan leaders to agree on mechanisms for a peaceful solution to the problems in their country. The OIC initiatives had also been agreed with the UN peace mission for Afghanistan.

General Dostum, while addressing a press conference in Mazar-i-Sharif on 7 August, condemned Indian interference in Afghanistan.

The Afghan Government, on 8 August, acknowledged that the Ilushin-76 cargo plane of Tatarjstan, which was forced to land by the Taliban in Kandahar, was chartered by Kabul to transport ammunition from Tirana, Albania. The Government, while defending its position, said it had the right to purchase ammunition for its defence needs from Albania as the two countries had already reached an agreement in this regard.

Russia, in a press release issued by the Embassy of the Russian Federation in Islamabad, contradicted reports emanating in the mass media from some countries, which had accused Moscow of encouraging or even organizing military supplies to Afghanistan.

A diplomat from the Russian Embassy in Islamabad went to Kandahar on 13 August, where 7 crew members of an Albanian cargo plane have been held since 3 August. The Taliban, for its part, demanded that Moscow provide a list of those intellectuals, mujahideen, and Ulema still missing from the Afghan war, before they release the crew of the cargo plane. A counsellor at the Russian Embassy in Pakistan, Zamir Kabulov, called the talks with the Taliban very difficult and their demands unrealistic. He said that the Taliban demanded information about 60,000 missing Afghans, saying they had been deported to the Soviet Union during the 10-year war.

Turkey reopened its Embassy in Kabul after a lapse of two and half years. Turkish Charge d'affaires, Salih Sen, after the formal reopening of his mission on 15 August, said "we feel that the security situation now is fine and we have, therefore, returned."

Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister went to Kabul on 20 August for talks on the current situation with the Afghan Government.

A counsellor at the Russian Embassy in Pakistan, Zamir Kabulov, returned to Kandahar on 25 August for renewed talks with the Taliban about the release of the aircraft and its crew. He disclosed on 27 August that the Taliban had issued new demands for their release including a pledge by Moscow not to interfere in the Afghan conflict.

Reports say that Russian President, Boris Yeltsin and his autonomous Tataristan counterpart, on 29 August, discussed the issue of the seven Russian crew members and the aircraft being held by the Taliban in Kandahar. A Russian delegation, which had held talks with the Taliban in Kandahar, is preparing to visit Afghanistan once more to secure the release of the plane's crew.

SEPTEMBER

Iran issued a stern warning to the Taliban on 6 September to stay clear of border regions with their country. Iranian Interior Minister, Ali Mohammad Besharati, said, on 6 September, that the Afghan warring factions must take care not to approach the (Iranian) frontier on the pretext of undertaking a "hot" pursuit against forces of the former Governor of Herat Province.

President Rabbani sent a message to the UN Secretary General, Boutros Boutros Ghali, complaining about the alleged intervention by Pakistani forces in the fall of Herat. Meanwhile, a Pakistani Foreign Office spokesman in Islamabad dismissed the accusation of the Afghan Government; and

said that Islamabad, while deploring the conflict between the various Afghan factions, had maintained its "total neutrality."

Pakistan evacuated the entire personnel of its Embassy in Kabul through a special air force plane, virtually closing down the mission. Meanwhile, the Government of Pakistan demanded restitution of its Embassy building and an unconditional apology from the Afghan Government over the attack on its mission. Pakistan's Foreign Minister announced, at a news conference 10 September, that unless these conditions were met, Islamabad would not re-open its Embassy in Kabul.

The Afghan Government shrugged off Pakistan's demand for an apology over the mob attack on its Embassy in Kabul which left one Pakistani dead and injured the Ambassador and other embassy staff. Meanwhile, Pakistan's Foreign Minister, Sardar Aseff Ali termed the Afghan Government's response to Pakistan's demands for an unconditional apology and payment of compensation as negative and reiterated that Pakistan would not reopen its Embassy in Kabul until their demands were accepted.

Hundreds of Afghan refugees staged a demonstration in Peshawar on 13 September to voice their protest against the Afghan Government for the attack on Pakistan Embassy in Kabul. Later, representatives of the seven party alliance went to the Afghan Consulate in Peshawar and submitted a verbal memorandum.

About 18 Afghan notables, claiming to be Central Shura members of Sayyaf's Ittehad-i-Islami, in a signed statement issued in Peshawar, condemned the attack on the Pakistan Embassy in Kabul.

The UN Secretary General's special envoy to Afghanistan, Ambassador Mehmood Mestiri, arrived in Islamabad on 16 September to resume his peace efforts.

Diplomatic activities relating to Afghanistan gained momentum with the arrival of OIC Secretary General Hamid al-Ghabid in Islamabad on 17 September. He held a meeting with Pakistan's Prime Minister, and discussed the situation in Afghanistan with reference to recent developments.

The Afghan Government arrested three Pakistanis in Kabul who were accused of being Pakistan's spies; and called upon the United Nations to take cognizance of Islamabad's continual interference in Afghanistan's affairs. A senior National Security Department official told reporters in Kabul that the documents, recovered from them during a physical search, proved their involvement in espionage against Afghanistan. However, a spokesman of the Pakistan Government dismissed the allegations, that Pakistan had sent spies into Afghanistan, as baseless.

Pakistan's Foreign Secretary announced on 18 September said that Pakistan has decided to withdraw certain diplomatic and other facilities extended to the Afghan faction holding power in Kabul.

Mehmood Mestiri went to Kabul on 19 September to restart peace talks and to try and stop the fresh round of fighting in Afghanistan. The Afghan Government urged UN peace envoy Mehmood Mestiri to give top priority to the issue of foreign interference in Afghanistan. It had been critical

of Mestiri's past attempts at brokering a peace agreement. Mestiri responded that "I have no specific programme but I have some new ideas for a new situation. I am just trying to understand what's going on".

The Afghan Deputy Foreign Minister, after his meeting with Mehmood Mestiri, said "there could be no peace talks with the Taliban unless they vacate the Provinces recently captured by them and snap their links with Islamabad".

The Taliban on 20 September, gave a five-day ultimatum to President Rabbani and his military backers to surrender or face an attack on Kabul. The deadline came from a senior Taliban spokesman on the western frontlines in Maidan Shahr.

Pakistan declared 13 Afghan diplomats, including the Charge d'Affaires of the Afghan Embassy in Islamabad, as *persona non grata* and asked them to leave the country within 48 hours. The announcement was made by Pakistan's Foreign Secretary on 21 September.

Sardar Wali, son-in-law of Afghan ex-King Zahir Shah confirmed that Pakistan's Foreign Minister Sardar Aseff Ali had held a meeting with Zahir Shah in Rome and discussed the prevailing situation in Afghanistan.

Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister, Allauddin Broujardi, held crucial talks with the Hezb-i-Islami leader Gulbuddin Hekmatyar in Jalalabad on 22 September and discussed the prevailing situation in Afghanistan.

France said on 23 September that it was pulling its top diplomats out of Afghanistan and called on its nationals as well as other Europeans to leave the country, where the capital faced an attack by the Taliban. The French Embassy in Kabul said it "recommends" that its nationals in Kabul and the surrounding region "temporarily leave Afghanistan". The Embassy in Kabul represents France as well as the 16-nation European Union.

President Rabbani's Government on 27 September offered to hold direct peace talks with all rival factions, including the Taliban and General Rashid Dostum's group.

OCTOBER

The UN Special envoy to Afghanistan, Mehmood Mestiri, went to Kabul on 1 October for the third time in a week to discuss "peace" with President Rabbani. "I have come to arrange a cease-fire," Mestiri told reporters in Kabul. This trip came just days after Rabbani had said he was willing to hold unconditional peace talks with his warring rivals.

President Rabbani, on 2 October, accepted a UN proposal for a ceasefire with opposition factions, on condition that this was agreed by all sides.

A spokesman, for General Dostum, in Pakistan, on 2 October, ruled out a ceasefire with President Rabbani until the President resigned.

Terming the Taliban as a strange phenomenon, the Iranian ambassador to Pakistan said that no one can achieve a military victory in war-torn Afghanistan. Talking to a group of newsmen at the Iranian embassy, he disapproved of the Taliban movement.

Mehmood Mestiri went to Mazar-i-Sharif on 2 October to hold talks with General Dostum and later returned to Kabul to meet with President Rabbani. On 3 October, he flew to Parachinar and held talks with Hezb-i-Islami leader, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, about a possible temporary ceasefire in Afghanistan. Sources quoted the Taliban as saying that they were willing to support peace efforts provided President Rabbani relinquished power.

In another dramatic development, the Taliban and four opposition parties Supreme Coordination Council resumed talks to explore the possibility of adopting a joint strategy and launching a joint attack on Kabul.

Mehmood Mestiri said on 7 October that there was a possibility of a temporary ceasefire soon among the three main warring Afghan factions. He added "I am working on a short ceasefire - for a few days - in order to allow the warring factions to get together to discuss a transfer of power".

Pakistan, on 9 October, ordered the immediate expulsion of Masood Khalili, a close aide and special envoy of Afghan President Rabbani, after terminating his visa.

A Foreign Office spokesman, on 13 October, categorically rejected the Afghan Government's charges that Pakistan was helping the Taliban movement in its current offensive against Kabul.

Mullah Mohammad Omer, founder of the Taliban movement, on 14 October, warned Tehran that cross-border raids by defeated Rabbani Government forces from Iranian soil would affect relations between Iran and Afghanistan.

Afghanistan's Ambassador to the United Nations, in a letter released on 16 October, charged Pakistan with funding mercenaries, in violation of its sovereignty and asked the UN Security Council to intervene.

Pakistan on 17 October, declared another group of 17 Afghan diplomats, staff members and other nationals *as persona non grata* and asked them to leave the country within 48 hours.

A crucial round of talks between the Afghan Government delegation and the Afghan leader Maulavi Younus Khalis in Jalalabad, aimed at installing the latter as the new President in Kabul, reportedly failed in the initial stages. It was after four days of persistent air raids and heavy rocket attacks on the Afghan capital by the Taliban that a team from Kabul, headed by Ittehad-i-Islami leader Professor Sayyaf, flew to Jalalabad and offered Maulavi Khalis the Presidency.

While talking to a group of journalists in Islamabad, Mehmood Mestiri said "I met President Rabbani in Kabul and he offered to step down provided his people are included in the future setup and there should be a reasonable mechanism for transfer of power."

NOVEMBER

The US Assistant Secretary of State for South Asian affairs, Ms. Robin Raphel, after holding talks with Pakistani Officials in Islamabad, flew to Afghanistan for talks with Afghan factions, groups, and individuals to find a negotiated settlement of the Afghan crisis. She meet leaders of Nangarhar Jehadi Shura, including Governor Haji Qadeer, in Jalalabad. She also held a meeting with General Rashid Dostum. She could not manage to land in Kabul to meet President Rabbani; and then flew to Bagram airbase and held talks with Ahmad Shah Masood on the lingering turmoil in Afghanistan and possible options for transfer of power to a neutral Government arrangement.

General Rashid Dostum, in an interview with BBC, said that the Government of Russia, Iran and Uzbekistan have asked him to support President Rabbani's Government. He said he was still a part of SCCIRA, the anti-Rabbani alliance; and further added that SCCIRA was continuing talks with the Taliban for the formation of an alliance against President Rabbani.

The Taliban reported that Iran had established a special headquarters in Tehran to coordinate the operations by pro-Rabbani forces from Iran's eastern border towards Nimroz and Herat.

Presidential spokesman said, on 5 November, that President Rabbani is ready to hand over power to a person or to a Committee on the basis of an agreement involving all sides in Afghanistan.

The Taliban claimed, on 6 November, that they had recently arrested a Russian army officer, General Ghilachov, in a desert in Herat, who was spying for Russia. A wireless set and a light machine-gun was recovered from the officer.

A spokesman of the former Afghan king, Mohammad Zahir Shah, told BBC on 6 November, that King Zahir is ready to assume power for an interim period if asked by the United Nations.

Afghan President Rabbani said, on 7 November, that he was willing to quit but only after an end to the civil war and to the external meddling in Afghanistan.

Pakistan's Foreign Minister, Sardar Aseff Ali, went to Mazar-i-Sharif on 7 November and discussed the situation in Afghanistan with General Dostum.

According to reports, on 8 November, two representative delegations of President Rabbani and Hezb-i-Islami (Hekmatyar) went to Tehran and started negotiations for a possible rapprochement through the mediation of the Iranian Government.

Mehmood Mestiri, on 14 November, held talks with President Rabbani on the transfer of power. A Defence Ministry spokesman in Kabul said "the President declared his readiness to transfer power; now it depends on whether Mestiri can convince the other groups".

After holding talks with President Rabbani and Ahmad Shah Masood in Kabul, the Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister urgently flew to Mazar-i-Sharif on 15 November and held talks with General Rashid Dostum.

The Taliban shifted the seven crew members of the Russian cargo plane in Kandahar following threats by the Russian Foreign Minister to use force to secure their release.

Chief of the Taliban Islamic Movement, Maulavi Mohammad Omer, said on 15 November, that only the Iranian involvement in Afghanistan's affairs has been proved so far; and there was no evidence of Pakistan's military help to the Taliban. "We have captured Iranian military vehicles, arms, and personnel helping anti-Taliban forces. No one has the proof of Pakistan providing military support to us", Maulavi Mohammad Omer told BBC, on the telephone.

Mehmood Mestiri said, on 16 November, that President Rabbani has agreed to the transfer power to a Council of 28 people representing the various warring factions. He said the 28 people selected, on the basis of their ethnic and political affiliations, would form the Council, which would take over power from President Rabbani. The list has also been handed over to the leaders of the Taliban and their response was awaited.

The Taliban, on 17 November, turned down the proposal by Mehmood Mestiri, for the transfer of power from President Rabbani to a 28-member Council. The Taliban spokesman said "this formula is unacceptable as it protects the Kabul regime and it would only add fuel to the fire of war".

The Supreme Coordination Council (anti-government alliance), on 18 November, rejected the plan of Mehmood Mestiri for the transfer of power and said that most of the members of the proposed commission were affiliated to President Rabbani.

Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister said, on 23 November, that Iran has turned down offers of dialogue with the Taliban. He said officials of the Taliban movement had contacted Iranian missions in Pakistan and Herat to request a dialogue with Iranian authorities, but it had not been agreed so far.

A week after the Taliban rejected the UN peace plan, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia called for an amendment to the plan.

DECEMBER

The Taliban rejected Mehmood Mestiri's peace plan and reiterated that they would continue fighting against President Rabbani till his defeat. Speaking at a public meeting, leaders of the Taliban strongly criticized the interference of India and Russia in Afghanistan and their military support to the Kabul Government. They refuted the allegations that the Taliban were being supported by Pakistan or any other country.

The UN sources in Islamabad said that Mehmood Mestiri, will brief the members of UN General Assembly on 11th December about his peace efforts and four additional proposals made by Saudi Arabia and Pakistan.

Afghan National Liberation Front (ANLF) strongly refuted the reports that the party chief, Professor Sibghatullah Mujaddadi, has resigned from the presidentship of the opposition alliance, Supreme Coordination Council.

A Russian Federation delegation arrived in Kandahar on 8 December to seek release of crew members of A-76 plane which was forced to land by the Taliban several months ago. The leader of the delegation on his arrival, said that diplomatic efforts indicate, there is no chance of an early release of the crew members of the plane and all formal talks are at a standstill with the Taliban.

Pakistan's ambassador to Afghanistan, Qazi Humayun, went to Jalalabad on 9 December to open a camp office at Pakistan's Consulate there.

Dr. El-Sadek Abu Nafeesa, advisor to Mehmood Mestiri, said that a central government, representing the will of the people, would be formed in Afghanistan as soon as possible. Speaking at a seminar organized by CCA on 10 December he said that the UN was determined not let down Afghanistan, but to continue efforts until the return of lasting peace there. He added that although the UN had not been successful in achieving the desired goal, its mission was not a total failure.

Pakistan and Iran agreed that only a broad-based national government can bring peace to Afghanistan. The understanding was reached during meetings with the visiting Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister, and Pakistan's Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary in Islamabad on 12 December. Meanwhile, the Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister termed the Afghan Government as legitimate, since it was represented at international organizations like the UN and OIC.

A first ever public meeting of the Taliban held at Azkhel refugee camp near Peshawar on 14 December, demanded that foreign countries to stop interfering in the affairs of Afghanistan and asked them to stop supporting President Rabbani's government.

The Afghan Deputy Foreign Minister, Abdul Rahim Ghafoorzai, during a debate on the Afghan situation at the UN General Assembly accused Pakistan of helping the Taliban against the Government of President Rabbani and of interfering in the internal affairs of Afghanistan. These accusations were rejected by Pakistan's Ambassador, Ahmad Kamal.

The Iranian deputy foreign minister, in a press conference in Kabul where he met key government figures, on 21 December said that he is "more optimistic" about the prospects of brokering a peace for Afghanistan as the warring factions now seemed keener to negotiate. He said that he had held talks on brokering an end to the civil war with President Rabbani, General Dostum, and Hezb-i-Wahdat faction.

A Taliban spokesman said on 21 December that in a meeting in Kandahar between the Taliban leader, Mullah Mohammad Omer, and a Russian delegation they have given a conditional assurance for the release of seven Russian airmen held captive in Kandahar. He added that the Russian captives would be freed 'before 1996' unless more evidence emerged to back the claims that Afghans missing from the Soviet occupation were being held by Russia.

Afghan leader, Pir Sayed Ahmad Gailani, on 23 December warned of the formation of united opposition front if President Rabbani failed to relinquish power in the favor of a neutral interim set-up. At the same time he expressed optimism about an early and peaceful transfer of power.

Pakistan on 24 December declared the Afghan Consul General in Peshawar, Musa Khan, as *persona non grata* and asked him to leave Pakistan within 48 hours.

Iranian deputy foreign minister, on 29 December, flew to Mazar-i-Sharif in northern Afghanistan and held talks with General Dostum. This was the fourth visit of the Iranian deputy foreign minister to Mazar-i-Sharif in the month of December. Earlier, he had travelled to Bamyan Province and held talks with the leader of Hezb-i-Wahdat, Karim Khalili. Meanwhile, President Rabbani sent a delegation to Bamyan which held talks with the leader of Hezb-i-Wahdat. In a related development, the Supreme Coordination Council leadership is busy in consultations to evolve a joint response to President Rabbani's fresh offer of peace talks.

For the first time in two years, a high-level delegation of President Rabbani's government reached Mazar-i-Sharif on 29 December, to hold reconciliation talks with General Dostum. According to reports, this trip was designed to pave the way for President Rabbani's visit to Mazar-i-Sharif. Meanwhile, a delegation of the Government headed by Professor Sayyaf arrived in Jalalabad to hold talks with the opposition leaders over the transfer of power.

Reports on 31 December say that the Taliban postponed the release of seven Russian airmen held captive in Kandahar. The Taliban said they had obtained extra information about Afghans who they alleged were being forcibly held in Russia.

SECURITY MATTERS

JANUARY

According to reports received from Ghazni on 10 January, at least 30 persons were killed or injured during clashes between the forces of Hezb-i- Islami and Harakat-i-Inqilab-i-Islami in Ghazni province of Afghanistan during a period of three days.

Military sources in Kabul said on 10 January that forces loyal to President Rabbani bombed rival faction's airbase south of Kabul in response to their attacks in Ghazni. He said that the airbase was used over the past four nights by the opposition forces to fly some 400 troops from northern Afghanistan to south Kabul.

At least 15 civilians were killed and 30 more injured when Russian jets bombed Maimo village of Badakhshan Province in northeast Afghanistan near the border with Tajikistan, Radio Kabul reported on 11 January.

Fierce fighting once again erupted between Government and Coordination Council forces in and around Ghazni on 16 January. However, the number of casualties was not ascertained.

Renewed rocket attacks on Kabul killed 22 people and wounded many more on 20 January ending a one week ceasefire, Radio Kabul said. Later, it was also reported that President Rabbani's forces fired several rockets on the positions of Hezb-i-Wahdat in Kabul, but the casualties were not known.

While fierce fighting was continuing in Ghazni, Government planes bombarded different positions of the Coordination Council on the outskirts of the Province on 24 January. Similarly, heavy fighting was also reported in Kunduz Province between opposition and Government forces where the opposition planes heavily bombarded Government forces.

At least 12 people were killed and 64 injured on 29 January when a barrage of rockets hit residential areas in Kabul as the UN peace mediator arrived there, Kabul Radio said.

FEBRUARY

President Rabbani's troops and Shi'ite Hezb-i-Wahdat forces traded artillery shells and rockets in west Kabul, on 7 February. Two hospitals reported admitting at least four wounded civilians. Later, on 10 February, at least 15 people were killed and several injured in a rocket barrage on Kabul city.

An Afghan Brigadier-General, a member of the Kabul City Council, was killed by unidentified persons in Peshawar on 13 February.

At least 15 civilians were wounded when President Rabbani's troops clashed with their Shi'ite rivals in south Kabul on 20 February, causing a temporary stop to public transport.

Forces loyal to President Rabbani and the Shi'ite Hezb-i-Wahdat exchanged intense rocket and artillery fire overnight on 26 February in Kabul, breaking a UN-sponsored ceasefire.

resumption of lending to his war-torn nation saying that the world must not forget the sacrifice and the world must not forget the country. "To say frankly, Afghanistan is a forgotten island in the heart of Asia with no one paying any attention to the plight and ordeals of its people" he added.

The United Nations received pledges and contributions of around US$6.2 million from a number of countries for welfare and relief projects in various parts of Afghanistan. According to two different reports issued by the UN, Canada is on top of the list, providing financial assistance of almost US$1.6 million. The United Kingdom provided US$1.2 million to the relief agencies working under the supervision of the UN High Commissioner for Afghan Refugees. Finland provided US$1.0 million, which included US$0.2 million for the mine clearance programme, US$0.7 million for the World Food Programme and US$0.1 million to UNOCHA. Portugal had contributed US$10,000 for the rehabilitation of Kabul museum.

According to a UNDCP press release issued in Islamabad, the United Nations Drug Control Programme has made available US$ 1 million for the extension of the Afghanistan Drug Control and Rural Rehabilitation project until the end of 1995.

A weekly update, of "Assistance for Afghanistan" circulated by the UN revealed that Norway had pledged a total of US$1.9 million towards the mine clearance programme.

Pakistan's Federal Government sanctioned funds to total of Rs.91 million to the Afghan Commissionerate, NWFP, for the year 1995-96 to continue its work. UNHCR and other donor agencies are also to completely stop aid assistance to the Afghan refugees by September 1995.

JUNE

A Donors Conference entitled "Briefing of Donors on Afghanistan, Longer-Term Rehabilitation Assistance and its Relationship with Humanitarian Programmes" was held in Stockholm, Sweden 1-2 June 1995. The Conference was organized by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and hosted by the Government of Sweden. Some 100 representatives of donor countries, UN agencies and both International and Afghan NGOs attended this meeting.

According to sources in Quetta, the Government decided to abolish all the Afghan refugees camps in districts of Pishin, Qala Abdullah, and Qala Saifullah from 1st October. The decision was made in view of the UNHCR announcement that they would not provide any assistance to the Afghan refugees after September. The authorities have also started preparing the lists of the Afghan refugees living in the camps so that they could be repatriated before the closure of the camps.

As peace and normalcy is gradually returning to Kabul, the people who were displaced by the fighting among rival Afghan factions are fast returning to their homes. A report released by UNHCR, indicated that with the improvement in the security situation, over 1,500 refugees were returning daily to their homes in Kabul.

Iran has taken steps to repatriate some 400,000 Afghan refugees, living there on temporary visas, by the end of summer, IRNA reported on 22 June.

MARCH

On the last day of Eid, President Rabbani's troops clashed with their Shi'ite rivals around Dehmazang Square in south Kabul. The fighting was mostly small-arms with lots of mortars but few rockets; one pro-Rabbani fighter was wounded.

President Rabbani's forces, backed by at least 10 air strikes of Su-22 fighter-bombers, launched a major assault against the Shi'ite group, Hezb-i-Wahdat, in southwest Kabul. At least 10 people were killed and another 200 wounded in the intensified fighting. An Official of ICRC said that seven people died on the operating table of Karte Se hospital, which was hit by several rockets.

Hezb-i-Wahdat threatened to launch Scud missiles against Government forces if they did not stop their assault on its enclave in southwestern Kabul. Wahdat forces fired rockets into Kabul killing more than 30 people and wounding some 90 others. ICRC sources said on 9 March, that during the last three days fighting, 300 casualties had been received in two hospitals in Kabul.

Two Afghans were killed and several others injured when a rocket fired by Hezb-i-Wahdat exploded in front of the Pakistan Embassy in Kabul city, on 9 March.

The staff of the Pakistan Embassy in Kabul was evacuated to Jalalabad on 12 March, in view of the growing risk to their safety, as a result of the severe fighting in Kabul.

Abdul Ali Mazari, leader of the Shi'ite Hezb-i-Wahdat and his nine companions, who had been captured by the Taliban, were killed in mysterious circumstances while being flown by helicopter from Charasyab to Kandahar on 13 March. At the same time, troops loyal to President Rabbani intensified attacks on the Taliban positions and at least 70 people were killed.

A Taliban spokesman said, on 18 March, that the shelling of civilians in Kabul by the Taliban during fighting was a mistake and would not be repeated. "If somebody has to kill people in order to have Kabul, this is savagery" he added.

Forces loyal to President Rabbani, on 19 March, pushed the Taliban back and took control of Charasyab, 25 km south of Kabul. Between 100 - 150 Taliban were killed in the fighting.

APRIL

Five people were killed when Russian aircraft bombed Baharak district in Badakhshan Province. The Government sources in Kabul also said that Russian jets, based in Tajikistan, bombed the northern Afghan town of Taloqan and a border district on 13 April. At least 125 civilians were killed and 250 others were severely wounded in the mentioned air attack. The Afghan Foreign Ministry sent a message to the United Nations protesting against the bombing and calling for efforts to halt the attacks.

Afghan Defence Ministry sources said on 16 April that minor clashes were reported between groups loyal to President Rabbani and Gulbuddin Hekmatyar 14 April in the vicinity of the eastern district town of Sarobi. It was only an incident between local commanders, not an organized fight, he added.

An important commander of Professor Sayyaf's Ittehad-i-Islami was killed, along with six of his bodyguards, when his vehicle overran a land-mine in Tezin area near Kabul on 15 April.

BBC reported on 23 April that the Taliban were holding 1000 men of Herat Governor, Commander Ismail Khan, and 300 Shi'ites from Hezb-i-Wahdat at a prisoners camp outside Kandahar city.

Two Pakistani FIA officials and their two friends, who were arrested by the Taliban near the Pak-Afghan border a few days before, were released as a result of intense negotiations between Taliban and Pakistan authorities.

MAY

According to Kabul Radio, forces loyal to President Rabbani killed 200 Taliban fighters and took another 180 prisoner during the fighting in the second week of May in Farah.

The Afghan Government sources claimed that the Taliban suffered reverses in Nimroz on 14 May, following air and ground attacks in which 37 persons were killed; while the number of wounded was said to be much higher. At the same time, 10 Taliban were arrested by Government forces.

Six high-ranking officials of General Dostum, made prisoner by the Rabbani Government during fighting in Kabul, were released. The six persons, including a high-ranking army officer, arrived in Peshawar from Kabul on 24 May.

JUNE

The Taliban forces, on 15 June, launched an attack on Chotu on the Pak-Afghan border - a military camp controlled by forces loyal to Ismail Khan, Governor of Herat. Seventy of Ismail Khans's forces were killed; however, a counter offensive pushed the Taliban across the Pakistani border where they took up new position. The ensuing battle left another 17 of Ismail Khan's men dead; and Chotu was reported to be under the control of the Taliban.

Two civilians were killed and another person wounded on 16 June in a pre-dawn bombing raid on Kabul by a jet belonging to General Dostum. A Defence Ministry spokesman in Kabul said "the casualties were caused by two 250-kg bombs dropped by a Dostum's Sukhoi Su-22 jet near Shahr-i-Naw park". Journalists who visited the bomb site noted one bomb had exploded just inside the central Kabul park while the second hit a house. Three bombs also exploded on the main road between Defence ministry building and the Presidential Palace but local security guards reported no casualties. Travellers reported jet attacks also near Bagram air base, 50 km north of Kabul.

Fighting broke out between forces of President Rabbani and General Dostum in Jawzjan and Khenjan in the northern Afghanistan. Radio Kabul claimed that during fighting in Jawzjan about 100 Dostum's men were killed while 660 others taken prisoners. However, Dostum's sources rejected Government's claims saying "we are defending our positions and have repulsed attacks".

An ICRC official, Herbert Patry, who had been wounded in the neck by a gun shot in Kabul was airlifted to Peshawar on 17 June to be flown to Geneva for a surgical operation.

JULY

According to reports on 11 July, President Rabbani's forces were locked in heavy fighting with Shi'ite Hezb-i-Wahdat faction around the town of Yakaolang in a bid to capture the strategic route to the north. Government troops advanced to within a few kilometers of the town and were fighting for control of outlying areas. On the other hand, an advisor of Hezb-i-Wahdat, M. Amin Mirzai, said that Shura-i-Nazar forces had launched an attack on Shaheedan area in Bamyan but it was repulsed. He claimed that at least 25 persons of Shura-i-Nazar forces were killed. Meanwhile, according to sources in Peshawar, General Dostum's planes on 12 July bombed Government positions in Bamyan.

According to reports, fighting erupted between General Dostum's forces and Government troops in Jawzjan and Samangan Provinces.

The national survey on the mine situation in Afghanistan conducted by Mine Clearance Planning Agency (MCPA) revealed that there are 20 - 25 mine incidents in Afghanistan every day. About 1,500 mine incidents have been recorded in the first three weeks of April 1995 in Kabul City alone. An area of more than 22 million square meters had been heavily mined in the city.

According to reports, fierce fighting erupted on 17 July between troops of General Dostum and forces of Herat Governor, Ismail Khan, in Badghis and Faryab provinces in the north-west of Afghanistan. General Dostum's sources claimed that they had captured several positions and their planes bombed Ismail Khan's positions.

Heavy fighting raged in northern Afghanistan on 23 July as forces of General Dostum and President Rabbani battled on the Salang Highway, north of Kabul. Reports say that on 25 July only, about 20 persons were killed or wounded.

AUGUST

An estimated 10 per cent of the total landmines used world wide have been laid in Afghanistan - making it perhaps the worst mine-affected country in the world. More than 20 civilians are killed or maimed by landmines in Afghanistan every day. Side by side with clearance operations, already in progress, the Afghan Campaign to Ban Landmines (ACBL) was officially launched in Kabul on 5 August. The aim of the campaign is to appeal to the international community to stop the production, use, export and stockpiling of landmines. It was also to encourage Afghan warring factions in Afghanistan to refrain from using new mines.

At least 22 long-range rockets hit the western part of Kabul on 9 August killing at least 21 people (including 8 persons of the same family) and injuring 31 others. A Peshawar-based diplomat said that Taliban fired the rockets from a mobile BM-40 multi-barrel rocket launcher which hit Karte Se, Darulaman and some other residential areas. However, the Taliban denied the rocket attack on the capital Kabul.

Hamidullah Zamani, an Afghan working for an aid agency, was shot and seriously injured by unknown gunmen in Canal Road, University Town, Peshawar. He was taken to Hayat Shaheed Teaching Hospital where he was under treatment.

At least 16 persons were killed and many others injured in fighting between troops loyal to President Rabbani and General Dostum forces in northern Salang Tunnel.

Two civilians were killed and nine wounded when rockets hit Kabul on 19 August for the second time in 10 days. Forty rockets from a BM-21 multi-barrel launcher hit Alauddin suburb.

Heavy fighting broke out in Paktia Province on 22 August between forces of Hezb-i-Islami (Hekmatyar) and Ittehad Islami (Prof. Sayyaf). At least 20 people were killed in the fighting for control of an important military base. Afghan airforce jets bombed the area and according to Pakistani officials, six bombs fell on the border town of Teri Mangal near Parachinar in which a high school building was damaged. Four more rockets fell on another border town in Pakistan.

SEPTEMBER

The Afghan Government confirmed that Dostum's jet planes had heavily bombed Bagram airbase, near Kabul, and at least 6 planes were destroyed.

More than 1,000 demonstrators attacked the Pakistan Embassy in Kabul on 6 September, killing at least two persons. The attack came a day after the Afghan Government accused Pakistani intelligence services of helping the Taliban capture the key western city of Herat.

The Taliban forced an Ariana Afghan Airline Boeing 727 to land at Kandahar airport on 21 September. The plane was carrying commercial cargo from the Gulf state of Dubai to Jalalabad.

A Taliban spokesman in Maidan Shahr said, on 24 September, that they postponed a threatened attack on Kabul at the request of the civilian population. The ultimatum, to the Government of President Rabbani to surrender, was to expire at midnight between 24-25 September.

OCTOBER

Talking to a group of journalists the acting leader of the Taliban threatened, on 6 October, that the Taliban would soon launch an attack on Kabul. He said a previous ultimatum of five days given to President Rabbani to step down or face an offensive was suspended to allow Kabul residents, foreign nationals, and members of humanitarian organizations to leave the city.

President Rabbani ordered the immediate arrest of all the guest mujahideen residing in the capital to forestall any uprising against his Government. Dr. Abdullah, vice-Minister of Defence, announced the arrest of 10 Algerian nationals. Some Sudanese were also arrested; they were blamed for recruiting Algerians to fight in Afghanistan against President Rabbani.

The Russian Foreign Ministry, on 8 October, warned the Taliban to release the Tataristan aviation company "Aerostan" aircraft; otherwise the responsibility for any consequences from this act would rest solely with the Taliban.

According to reports, the situation in Kabul is tense following Mehmood Mestiri's departure from Kabul, on 10 October, without brokering a ceasefire between the warring factions. Reports added

that residents of Kabul were running in all directions over the last one week despite the Government's strict check on fleeing families.

The hands and feet of two young Afghans convicted of theft were publicly amputated in Ghazni Province. Abdullah Sultani Jehadwal, head of the security department in Ghazni, told "The News" that the right hand and left foot of Mohammad Azim and Maheen Khan were amputated in the presence of several thousand people after they had been found guilty by the Taliban's Shariah court. Earlier, a man convicted of adultery was publicly lashed 100 times in the city. Meanwhile a Taliban commander, Malik Surkai, arrested four drug traffickers in Katawaz area, Paktika Province. They were also being tried by the Islamic court of the Taliban.

Eight people were killed in a rocket attack on a central Kabul market on 21 October, as the UN mediator discussed peace prospects with President Rabbani.

According to the officials, three people were wounded in Kabul city on 22 October when Taliban aircraft bombed the Afghan capital for the first time during the latest round of fighting. Later, for the second time in 24 hours, the Taliban exhibited their vastly-improved air power by bombing Kabul again. Afghan sources said two low-flying jets pierced Kabul's air defence system and bombed Qargha garrison. Dr. Abdullah, a close aide of Masood, blamed the Taliban for the attack and said Russian SU-22 (Sukhoi) aircraft were used in the raid.

According to security officer in Kabul, all flights into Kabul were temporarily suspended on 27 October as another barrage of rockets rained down near the airport. He said planes were being re-routed to Bagram military airport, 50 km north of Kabul.

NOVEMBER

According to Radio Kabul, Government planes launched an air attack on a military convoy of the Taliban near Maidan Shahr, 40 km southwest of Kabul. About 180 persons were killed in the attack.

Government officials in Kabul said that 4 persons were killed and 9 others wounded on 1 November as the Taliban fired artillery into Pul-e-Mahmood Khan area close to the Defence Ministry.

According to Radio Kabul, the Taliban fired a barrage of rockets at Kabul on 5 November, after launching two abortive attacks on the capital. At least one rocket landed in the Italian Embassy compound while another hit the ambassador's residence.

General Abdul Hakim Katawazi, a spokesman for the "Council of Understanding and National Unity of Afghanistan", was gunned down in Peshawar on 2 November. Similarly, another Afghan tribal elder, Wakil Wazir Mohammad, was killed in Hayatabad township, Peshawar, on 3 November.

A spokesman of the Taliban, in Peshawar, claimed that the Taliban fired six missiles on the Military Academy in Kabul, which killed eight solders loyal to President Rabbani and injured 15 others. Defence Ministry sources in Kabul also reported that two people were killed when the Taliban fired a barrage of rockets on the Afghan capital on 7 November.

Four persons were killed and 4 others injured when the Taliban fired a barrage of rockets on Kabul on 8 November; but the front-lines around the city were calm except for some sporadic shelling. Reports also add that on 10 November, Six people including a young girl were killed and 24 injured when salvos of rockets fired from Taliban positions south of Kabul fell in Kabul.

A rocket fired by the Taliban killed 9 persons, while they were filming a scene for a movie in Kabul. Later, on 12 November, the Taliban on 12 November launched a massive artillery and rocket attack on Kabul leaving some 50 people killed and more than 80 wounded. In retaliation Afghan Government jet fighters heavily bombed Taliban positions in Maidan Shahr.

According to Radio Kabul, twenty one civilians were killed and 60 others injured, when rockets fired from Taliban positions south of Kabul fell on the Afghan capital on 13 November.

The Pakistani Consulate in Herat had experienced two acts of sabotage since September, when the Taliban captured Herat from forces loyal to President Rabbani. In both cases, the Consulate staff escaped unhurt. However, the Consulate building suffered minor damage in the first blast caused by an explosive device. In the second incident, the time bomb exploded on the street outside the Consulate building.

At least eight civilians were killed and 16 injured when a Taliban jet bombed a residential area in central Kabul on 20 November. Similarly, three Taliban jets bombed residential areas of central Kabul on 26 November killing at least 39 persons and injuring more than 140 in the worst-ever air raid on the Afghan capital.

DECEMBER

Seventeen civilians were killed and 26 injured when the Taliban launched a rocket attack on Kabul. Meanwhile, the Taliban's jet planes dropped two bombs on Kabul airport on 1 December, damaging the runway but causing no major casualties in the third air raid on besieged Kabul in two weeks.

A senior commander of the Taliban, Abdul Qayyum, known as Mulla Mesher, was killed during an air raid by President Rabbani's aircraft on his base, 15 km southeast of Kabul.

Defence ministry sources in Kabul said, on 10 December that the Government jets bombed a major stronghold of the Taliban outside the besieged capital Kabul, killing 27.

Three people, including two civilians were killed and two others injured when the Taliban launched an artillery attack on Kabul. It was also reported that at least 12 people, mostly civilians, were killed and 15 others wounded when the Taliban fired a salvo of rockets on Kabul on 17 December.

Twelve rockets landed in Kabul on 21 December, killing 5 people and wounding 18, and a salvo of 11 rockets on 22 December wounded four people. Later on 30 December, eight civilians were killed and 41 injured when rockets and shell salvoes struck the besieged Kabul city.

OTHER NEWS

JANUARY

About 250 Afghan Ulema (religious scholars) living in NWFP, who met at Jalozai camp, announced, on 2 January, their support for the Taliban and resolved that only they could steer Afghanistan out of the crisis.

Amnesty International, while reporting human rights catastrophe in Afghanistan, including mass murders, arbitrary detention-tortures, widespread rape of women and children, carried out by armed political persons, condemned the international community for ignoring conflict in Afghanistan.

Afghan Minister for Public Health, Dr. S. M. Amin Fatimie, inaugurated a three-day national seminar in Jalalabad, undertaken with WHO support, to design a master plan for the implementation of the concept of "Essential Drugs" in Afghanistan on 7 January.

A seminar which was held in Jalalabad and attended by the Afghan Public Health minister, representatives of WHO, UNICEF, and some NGOs decided to organize the second phase of the nationwide vaccination campaign in Afghanistan on 23 April.

According to the General Manager of Ariana Air-lines in Peshawar, Ariana would resume its flights between Peshawar and Kabul on 18 January.

A British citizen, Eden Fernandez, was released on 21 January after being held captive for eight months by the Shi'ite group, Hezb-i-Wahdat Islami. He was handed over to a British diplomat at the rocket scarred Hezb-i- Wahdat headquarters in Kabul.

FEBRUARY

Hundreds of the Afghan refugees staged demonstrations in front of the UNHCR office in New Delhi and asked for more UN attention to refugee problems.

A large number of Afghan refugees (mostly from Kabul) held a demonstration before the UN office in Peshawar on 7 February. They urged UN officials to speed up the peace efforts.

Iranian state Radio reflected official confusion and a sense of distrust towards the Taliban, who had rapidly grown into a well-armed force.

MARCH

The amputation of hands and feet of three Afghans convicted of theft was carried out in Helmand Province in Afghanistan on the order of Islamic courts, established by the Taliban. Two men, found guilty of murder, were earlier executed in Kandahar while another person was publicly flogged.

Following the restrictions on the Afghan transit trade by Pakistan, the Afghan Ariana Airline began twice weekly flights to airlift tonnes of foreign-made clothes from Dubai to Jalalabad, capital of Afghanistan's eastern Province of Nangarhar.

According to reports, eight armed dacoits looted Rs.600,000 in cash and injured three staff of a Peshawar-based NGO (Human Concern International) in the University Town area at about 2:30 am on 7 March. They also took a licensed kalashinkov from the guards.

The Taliban banned any transactions in the Pakistani rupee in Khost Province on 10 March and announced the enforcement of Shariah. They also banned people from carrying heavy weapons.

The Saudi Arabian Government refused to issue Haj visas to Afghans from its embassy in Islamabad and other diplomatic offices in Pakistan.

President Rabbani asked all displaced persons, at the start of the new academic year on 25 March, to vacate school buildings in Kabul.

APRIL

According to the BBC, 22 bodies, with their hands tied, had been discovered in a mass grave on the main road linking Kabul with Charasyab.

Some 354 people died and 54 others injured when a landslide buried Qara Luk village, Badakhshan Province, in northeastern Afghanistan.

Two mass graves containing bodies of at least 18 Afghan execution victims, some decapitated, were unearthed in the Medical Faculty of Kabul University. All bodies in the two graves were naked and mummified; and those, that had not been decapitated, had been shot in the skull.

Pakistan made it clear at the transit trade talks with Afghanistan, held in Islamabad, that it would not release goods impounded at Karachi unless Kabul agreed to accept the revision of the 1965 Transit Trade Agreement.

Kabul University was reopened on 4 April after a gap of three years. President Rabbani presided at the reopening ceremony. According to recent estimates compiled by the Government, an amount of US$ 50 million was needed to restore the site fully.

At least 10 people were killed in flooding caused by heavy rains in Chai Aab district of Takhar Province. The floods destroyed or damaged some 1400 houses and 300 hectares of crops there.

Dr. Faizullah Kaker, an Afghan Scientist, disclosed that in some parts of Afghanistan, 30 per cent of children are born dead due to iodine deficiency.

According to UNHCR, repatriation was increasing rapidly since late March, with verified encashment of refugee family ration cards up to 30 each day, at the main centre on the road to Torkham Pass.

Hundreds of Afghan women, activists of the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan (RAWA), chanting slogans against Mujahideen leaders and the Taliban, staged a demonstration and marched from the University Town in Peshawar on 29 April.

MAY

The sacrificial meat distribution for Afghan refugees, which started May 11, ended with the arrival of the fourth and last chartered flight from Saudi Arabia. In the four flights 140 MT meat was transported form Saudi Arabia with the cooperation of Islamic Development Bank (IDB); it was distributed amongst 33,459 Afghan refugee families in and around Peshawar.

Reports said that because of continued fighting in Bamyan Province to the west of Kabul, centre of an old Gandahara civilization, the fate of two huge Buddha statues, one 53 feet and the other 50 feet high, were in danger. The two statues were used as shields by the warring factions.

According to reports from Miranshah, hundreds of refugees were returning their ration cards to officials for the allocation of Rs.3,300 cash, three bags of wheat and a tarpaulin and were returning to their homeland.

JUNE

President Rabbani, in a meeting with the Afghan Anti-Narcotics Commission on 31 May, proposed a regional agreement between Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iran to control illicit drugs; and also that the United Nations Drug Control Programme should also associate itself with the proposed tripartite arrangement.

JULY

According to reports, UNHCR was planning to host a national women's conference in Kabul this month. The conference would discuss issues concerning Afghan women and help prepare the Afghan delegation for the global women's Conference to be held in Beijing, China in August.

According to VOA, Amnesty International found serious human rights deficiencies in Afghanistan. In its annual report the group said lack of a central authority coupled with continuing strife between rival armed factions had created a climate where extra-judicial killings and torture occurred with alarming frequency. Various armed political groups were involved in carrying out mass murder, torture including the rape of women and children and arbitrary arrest and detention of their political opponents and unarmed civilians.

Cholera struck parts of Afghanistan killing 97 persons in Badakhshan Province and an unspecified number in Ghazni and Paktika Provinces.

AUGUST

The crew of a Norwegian cargo boat rescued 70 Afghans and 3 Sri Lankans from four lifeboats drifting in the Baltic Sea. An Afghan told Danish television that the crew of the boat, which had been hired to transport them to Denmark, forced them at gunpoint into the four lifeboats. Each of them had paid US$5,000 to those organizing the trip.

The new Consul General of the Peshawar based Afghan Consulate, Musa Khan, took charge of the office on 3 August.

SEPTEMBER

A man convicted for the murder of his wife was sentenced to death (capital punishment) under Islamic law. He was publicly hanged on the order of the Nangarhar Shura in Jalalabad City.

On 11 September, an Ariana Afghan Airlines plane crashed near Jalalabad airport in Eastern Afghanistan in which three passengers were killed and 47 injured. The plane with 54 people on board, was on a flight from Kabul to Jalalabad.

OCTOBER

The Taliban, under the Islamic punishment of Qisas, executed a murderer by firing squad in public in Paktika Province on 2 October.

The Taliban urged the Pakistan Government to take notice of the growing complaints by Afghan refugees that they were being harassed by the police. A statement, issued by the Taliban office in Peshawar, claimed that the police had illegally attacked houses of Afghan refugees in camps at Kahi Kandao, Naryab, Darsamand, Mamokhwar, Munda and Haripur.

Pakistan demanded from the Afghan Government approx. US $15 million as compensation for the loss of life and property in two attacks on its Embassy in Kabul.

The Taliban handed over a list to the Russians seeking information on nearly 7000 missing Afghans, in exchange for the release of the seven-member Russian crew held in Kandahar. The secretary to the Taliban leader, Mullah Wakil Ahmad, confirmed that the list, handed over to a joint UN-OIC team, contained names of 6,749 persons, who went missing during the 14 years of war in Afghanistan. "We understand that some of them might have been killed but we also have reasons to believe that majority of them are in prisons in the former Soviet Republics", he further added.

NOVEMBER

Eight Afghans held by the Government of Turkmenistan were freed following a meeting between the Taliban authorities and a Turkmen delegation in Torghundi, along the Afghan-Turkmen border.

The administration of Laghman Province, affiliated to Hezb-i-Islami (Hekmatyar), started awarding punishment to criminal elements according to Islamic law. Three people were punished by death under Qisas rules in Mehtarlam, Laghman.

Islamabad police launched a massive hunt against Afghans and arrested more than 80 Afghan nationals from different parts of Islamabad.

DECEMBER

Two Afghans were killed and another sustained injuries when a bomb went off at a scrap shop in Torkham on 9 December.

Two female relatives of the former Afghan King Zahir Shah were gunned down by unidentified persons at Jalozai refugee camp near Peshawar.

JULY

A mid-term review of the consolidated inter-agency appeal revealed that the UN agencies, the international community and NGOs have made available substantial inputs through short-term and small scale humanitarian assistance projects, which have encouraged the process of rehabilitation in the rural areas of Afghanistan to begin. However, contributions of US$60.2 million were still required to meet the target of the Consolidated Appeal (1994-95) for humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan.

Britain announced it was to provide a further Rs.13.75 million to the demining programme of the British mine clearance NGO, Halo Trust in the Shamali valley in Parwan province, Afghanistan. Britain had also contributed Rs.50 million to UNOCHA's demining programme.

UNHCR reported that between June 16 and 22, a total of 12,433 persons were recorded returning to Kabul via Pul-e-Charkhi; of these 4,311 persons returned from Pakistan. In total, an estimated 116,831 persons had returned to Kabul since 6 April 1995.

An agreement to provide over Rs.923 million for assistance to Afghan refugees in Pakistan in 1995 was signed on 9 July by the Secretary of SAFRON (representing the Government of Pakistan), the Country Director of WFP in Pakistan, and the Representative of UNHCR in Pakistan. The food assistance being provided by WFP (valued at Rs.750 million) comprised 64,000 MT of wheat and 9,955 MT of edible oil - for some 1.2 million registered Afghan refugees still residing in Pakistan. The distribution of rations for refugees and maintenance of the feeding programme was to be terminated on 30 September 1995. This programme has lasted for 15 years at an estimated cost of US $1.4 billion.

The European Commission announced new humanitarian aid of 6.66 million ECU (equivalent to about Rs.275 million). The aid was to be directed principally to the relief of the suffering in Kabul where the European Community Humanitarian Office will coordinate with ICRC, UNICEF and 12 European NGOs to mount an aid programme over 6 months. The aid would be provided to restore clean drinking water supplies, sanitation work, re-equipping hospitals, provision of shelter and food for the most needy people.

The Girl Scouts of Japan contributed over 13,000 individual "peace packs" containing useful items for use in school and home. The "peace packs" were being delivered by UNHCR to over 13,000 Afghan school boys and girls in different cities of Afghanistan.

About 300,000 displaced people in Jalalabad were asked by the UN to leave for Kabul; assistance would be stopped at the end of September 1995.

According to UNHCR, a record number of Afghan refugees were returning home from Iran. Many of them had been encouraged by the lull in fighting while others had been put under growing pressure to leave by the Iranian authorities. More than 50,000 had already returned to Afghanistan this year.

In the biggest ever drug haul, the Taliban, on 9 December seized 1050 kilograms of fine quality heroin in Gardez which was being smuggled to Pakistan. Sources said that the seized heroin was owned by persons belonging to a local tribe who had been arrested and would be tried in an Islamic court.

Afghan leaders expressing their deep sorrow and grief over the bomb blast in Peshawar strongly condemned this act of terrorism. The leaders who sent their condolences included, Pir Sayed Ahmad Gailani, Maulavi Mohammad Nabi Mohammadi, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, Sibghatullah Mujaddadi, and General Dostum. Afghan commanders Maulavi Jalaluddin Haqqani, Maulavi Nizamuddin Haqqani, Yaqub Shariatyar of Hezb-i-Islami (Khalis), and Governor of Nangarhar, Haji Abdul Qadeer. Hezb-i-Wahdat Afghanistan also condemned the blast and expressed solidarity with the bereaved families.

Meanwhile, the Afghan Government on 22 December denied any involvement in the car bomb blast in Peshawar and said that it was deeply grieved by the casualties and prays for the early recovery of those injured in the blast. Professor Sayyaf, an ally of President Rabbani has also condemned the act of subversion and termed it inhuman and un-Islamic.

PROPERTY OF ACKU

AUGUST

Pakistan's Foreign Minister, Sardar Aseff Ali, assured General Dostum on 7 August that Pakistan would send a 15-member team of experts to Mazar-i-Sharif to chalk-out plans to restore the telephone system and explore for oil in the area. He donated US$ 5,000 for the renovation of the tomb of Sakhi Saheb in Mazar-i-Sharif.

According to reports, the already drastically reduced food basket of commodities for Afghan refugees residing in Pakistan, was to be stopped by UNHCR and WFP as from 1 September. Orphans, widows and disabled persons, which constituted an estimated 15 per cent of these refugees would be affected adversely by the stoppage of aid.

Commissioner for Afghan Refugees stated that, despite the shortage of foreign aid to Afghan refugees, Pakistan's Government would continue to provide assistance to Afghan refugees until their return to Afghanistan.

SEPTEMBER

A delegation from a Japanese NGO, called Global Rainbowship, had a meeting with the Commissioner for Afghan Refugees in Peshawar on 12 September. The NGO donated a sum of US$10,000 for relief of Afghan refugees and announced that it would provide some wheat and other items as well.

The World Food Programme (WFP) was terminating its General Feeding Programme for more than 1.2 million Afghan refugees in Pakistan on 30 September. WFP would implement a safety-net programme for vulnerable groups of the refugee population.

A US C-141 military plane landed in Peshawar on 25 September bringing a US$327,000, in value, consignment of humanitarian supplies for Afghan refugees in Pakistan and displaced people inside Afghanistan.

OCTOBER

A high level United Nations official, Peter Hansen, arrived in Islamabad 3 October to study Pakistan's request to restart humanitarian assistance for Afghan refugees, which had been terminated on 30 September. He went to Kabul 4 October as part of an Afghan tour, prior to the launching of the 1995-96 aid appeal.

Based on direct information, the Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS), distributed 28 MT of food items (14 MT rice and 14 MT wheat) among the people of Badakhshan. KRCS had also airlifted 7.5 MT Sugar and 7.5 MT edible oil to Badakhshan in August, for the relief of "landslide victims" and other vulnerable groups. Furthermore, 21 MT wheat, 21 MT rice and 3 MT tea was procured from the nearby Provinces of Kunduz and Takhar.

The British Government has given Rs.1.5 million to fund the continuing work of a basic health unit in Jehad Kali refugee camp near Peshawar.

Finland, on 10 October, donated 16 mobile offices, at a cost of US $0.8 million, as humanitarian aid to Afghanistan. The mobile offices were to be placed in Mazar-i-Sharif, Kandahar, Jalalabad, Herat, and other sites. Finnish Embassy said in Islamabad that this was as a response to the appeal by the United Nations Office of the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance to Afghanistan.

The European Commission committed ECU 9 million (approx. Rs.361 million) to UNHCR to assist Afghan refugees returning to Afghanistan.

NOVEMBER

Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) distributed food stuffs with a value of US$ 31,000 among those affected by the landslide and drought in Badakhshan Province. Almost 9000 families were assisted by the 90 MT provided. KRCS also donated a further US$ 10,000 for a water supply scheme being executed by WHO in Faizabad, Badakhshan.

UNICEF announced, on 10 November, that it was suspending aid for education programmes in the Taliban-controlled areas of Afghanistan, where schools for girls were being closed.

Iranian officials in Tehran said, on 20 November, that some 250,000 Afghan refugees would be repatriated via Turkmenistan soon - based on an agreement reached between Iran, Afghanistan and the UNHCR.

According to a British High Commission press release, grants of over 5 million Pounds sterling have been made available from the Overseas Development Administration (ODA) for humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan.

The Taliban Movement criticized UNICEF for stopping its assistance in the field of education in areas controlled by the Taliban, and termed it unjustifiable and unfortunate. In a written statement, the Taliban said that hundreds of schools were functioning in Taliban-held areas but an acute shortage of funds affected their working. It said that, despite constraints, the Taliban had done whatever was possible to provide education facilities to the young generation. The statement also said that the Taliban were not opposed to female education and added that one proof of this was the recent setting up of a nursing school for women and a regional health laboratory in Kandahar.

DECEMBER

The Pakistan Government told 11 French members of a French organization (MADERA), working to resettle refugees in rural areas, to leave Pakistan by 11 December 1995. According to a news paper, *The News*, French sources said the decision to expel MADERA came over accusations that the organization was channelling assistance to the Kabul Government. However, it was later reported that Pakistan's Government on an advice from the foreign office revised its earlier orders and allowed the 11 member of MADERA to remain in Pakistan until 27 December 1995.

Charles A. MacFadden, the Executive Director of Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief (ACBAR) called on the NWFP Governor, Khurshid Ali Khan at Governor's House on 13 December. He discussed matters pertaining to aid institutions with the Governor.

The European Commission EC has committed 7.8 million ECU (equivalent to Rs.329 million) of food aid commodities to be channelled through WFP, Afghanistan, for protracted refugee operations in Afghanistan. The food aid consists of 20000 tons of wheat, 1900 tons of sugar, 1000 tons of vegetable oil and 2000 tons of pulses.

A UN delegation reached Herat to hold talks with the Taliban leaders on the rehabilitation of Afghan refugees being repatriated from Iran. Mulla Yar Mohammad, Governor of Herat, said that the delegation from Geneva, during talks with him on 6 December, promised to help rehabilitate the half million Afghan refugees returning from Iran and also assist schools. He said the UN is spending US$ 10 million for the rehabilitation of the displaced Afghans.

BBC reported on 13 December that according to the UN's Humanitarian Affairs Coordinator based in Kabul, the crises of both food and fuel are now so high that many thousands of people in the city may not be able to survive the winter unless substantial quantities of aid reaches them. He added that "it is difficult to get supplies into the city because at the moment the roads leading to the city from north and south are frequently blocked by the government opponents".

The representative of UNHCR, Jacques Mouchet, visited Afghan refugee camps at Kot Chandna, and Mianwali, on 15 December. He said that the problem of refugees relating to health and drinking water would be solved. Besides providing education and health facilities, they would also be provided edible oil.

On 19 December, Red Cross officials in Kabul said the food and fuel prices were now beyond the reach of almost 70 per cent of the population in Kabul and without help from abroad thousands of people might not survive the winter.

The European Commission announced new humanitarian aid of 5,730,000 ECU (equivalent to Rs.260 million) for the Afghan people. According to a press release the new aid was to be directed mainly to the relief of suffering in Kabul, where projects will be implemented to provide medical care, sanitation, shelter and heating. In Kandahar, projects to provide medical care and sanitation, nutritional supplements, shelter and basic needs for vulnerable groups will also be implemented.

The United Nations in response to its appeal for financial assistance of US$ 123.978 million for Afghanistan during October 1995 - September 1996 has received only US$ 12.90 million pledges so far. The report said that United Kingdom has given US$4,587,904; Netherlands US$2,468,153; Denmark US$1,441,441; Switzerland US$1,238,938; Germany US$24,511; Holy See US$15,000; an NGO of Qatar US$30,000; and an NGO of Kuwait US$10,000.

The ambassador of the People's Republic of China handed over a donation of goods (blankets and medicines) worth Rs.6 million for Afghan refugees settled in Pakistan.

The Government of Pakistan has decided to tighten screws on foreign NGOs. Newspaper reports say that the Government will not allow new foreign NGOs to operate in the country unless their credentials and those of their staff are certified by the ambassador concerned.

MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

JANUARY

Head of the Security Commission in Kabul, General Younus Qanooni, said on 3 January that any resignation by President Rabbani would not put at risk the recent improvements in the policing of the capital as the forces were independent of the various rival factions.

About 1100 Afghan Taliban left NWFP for Kandahar on 9 January to reinforce the Taliban fighters who captured four Provinces (Kandahar, Helmand, Uruzgan and Zabul) in southwestern Afghanistan during November & December 1994. The spokesman of Taliban said that about 1200 Afghan Taliban had earlier left NWFP to join their colleagues.

A spokesman of Hezb-i-Islami (Hekmatyar) said that the blockade of Kabul had been ended and all the roads and highways leading to Kabul were opened for a period of one week. The removal of the checkposts began on 12 January.

According to reports, Commander Ahmad Shah Masood, head of Shura-i-Nazar, was appointed as organizational in-charge of Jamiat-i-Islami Afghanistan by President Rabbani.

Encouraged by their earlier success, some 300 Taliban fighters took control of Ghazni on 18 January, extending their writ to the fifth Province in two months.

According to reports, Taliban fighters were moving towards Farah and Herat Provinces in the west of Afghanistan. Afghan sources said that Governor Ismail Khan had put his forces on alert near the border of the two Provinces.

Situation in Ghazni Province became tense as Taliban launched an offensive to stop the Hezb-i-Islami advance on the city. It was reported that the Taliban were pushing back Hezb-i-Islami forces which were camped outside the city.

Hezb-i-Islami and its allied parties resumed the blockade of all roads leading to Kabul, on 22 January 1995.

Military sources said on 24 January that Taliban fighters and factions loyal to President Rabbani have joined forces to defend the provincial capital of Ghazni, inflicting heavy casualties on Hezb-i-Islami forces. The Governor of Ghazni, Qari Baba, said that Hezb-i-Islami forces which had briefly captured parts of the city were repulsed.

The Taliban leaders addressing a press conference on 26 January warned that their next target will be Kabul if President Rabbani and his rival Gulbuddin Hekmatyar failed to establish a purely Islamic Government in Afghanistan.

General Dostum's forces claimed to have captured Kunduz city in northern Afghanistan on 29 January but President Rabbani's Jamiat-i-Islami quickly denied the claim.

FEBRUARY

The Taliban who already took full control of five southeastern Provinces seized power in two more Provinces, Paktia and Paktika.

After heavy fighting near Ghazni (130 Km southeast of Kabul), the Taliban, on 2 February, moved into Wardak Province, very close to the provincial capital, Maidan Shahr, a Hezb-i-Islami stronghold.

While about 1000 Taliban equipped with heavy weapons, including 12 tanks, were preparing for the final onslaught on Maidan Shahr, Hezb-i-Islami of Hekmatyar indicated that it was ready to provide safe passage to Taliban to enter Kabul. However, at the same time, it warned of retaliation if Maidan Shahr was attacked.

The strategically important Province of Kunduz fell to forces of the Supreme Coordination Council (anti-Rabbani coalition) on 5 February after several days of fierce fighting. The report was also confirmed by a spokesman of the Defence Ministry in Kabul on 6 February.

A spokesman of President Rabbani said on 9 February that Government forces began an offensive in the north of the country along the Salang Highway (Salang tunnel), as part of the Government plan to recapture Kunduz, which had fallen to the opposition forces.

According to reports, Taliban launched a massive attack on Maidan Shahr late at night on 9 February and after two hours of fierce fighting they took complete control of the town. With this victory Kabul and Charasyab came within striking range of the Taliban.

Taliban claimed, on 13 February, that the capital of Logar Province, Pul-e-Alam together with Khoshi and Kolangar districts and the various districts of Wardak Province were fully under their control. The report was also confirmed by a spokesman of the Defence Ministry in Kabul.

The headquarters of Hezb-i-Islami in Charasyab fell to Taliban on 14 February after Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and his men fled their fortified base in front of the Taliban's advance on the area. Hezb-i-Islami forces left behind several tanks, armored vehicles, heavy weapons and several helicopters; and fled to Sarobi, about 60 km east of Kabul.

A spokesman of the Defence Ministry in Kabul said that the forces of President Rabbani recaptured Kunduz city and all strategic surrounding areas in swift operations on 14 February. However, no independent confirmation was available.

The Taliban overran the bases of Hezb-i-Islami (Hekmatyar) in Khost without encountering any resistance. Hezb commanders and fighters fled when confronted by the Taliban.

Following negotiations, on 15 February, between commanders of President Rabbani and the Taliban, the forces of President Rabbani partially withdrew on 16 February from the southern fringes of Kabul (Pul-e-Charkhi area), handing over at least three positions to the Taliban.

ACBAR

NEWS SUMMARY ON AFGHANISTAN

1995

PROPERTY OF ACKU

PROPERTY OF ACBAR

AGENCY COORDINATING BODY FOR AFGHAN RELIEF

2 REHMAN BABA ROAD
UNIVERSITY TOWN
PESHAWAR

TEL : (0521) 44392 / 40839

PROPERTY OF ARIC Established 1989

FEBRUARY 1996

I am pleased to make available a summary of the significant news - extracted from The News, Frontier Post, Muslim, and The Nation - related to Afghanistan for 1995.

For easy access, the document has been listed under five headings (by months):

- Aid and Economic Developments
- Military Developments
- Political Developments
- Security matters; and
- Other News

It is hoped that this ACBAR report will prove useful and be of significant value for NGOs, donors and other interested persons.

Charles A. MacFadden
Executive Director
January 1996

SELECTED EVENTS OF 1995

JANUARY

The Taliban (Islamic Religious students) after capturing four southwestern provinces of Afghanistan (Kandahar, Helmand, Uruzgan and Zabul) in November & December 1994, took control of Ghazni Province.

Mehmood Mestiri, Special UN envoy, arrived in Kabul on the first day of the new year with a formula for the transfer of power.

Fifteen civilians were killed and 30 injured when Russian jets bombed Maimo village of Badakhshan Province in Afghanistan near the border with Tajikistan.

Amnesty International, while reporting on the human rights catastrophe in Afghanistan, including mass murders, arbitrary detention-tortures, rape of women & children, carried out by armed political persons, condemned the international community for ignoring the conflict in Afghanistan.

FEBRUARY

The Taliban took control of Paktia, Paktika, and Wardak Provinces; captured the capital of Logar Province; overran the headquarters of Hezb-i-Islami in Charasyab; and captured military bases of Hezb-i-Islami (Hekmatyar) in Khost.

The Taliban overran bases of Hezb-i-Islami (Hekmatyar) in Khost without encountering any resistance. Hezb commanders and fighters fled when confronted by the Taliban.

Mehmood Mestiri, said that the transfer of power by President Rabbani to a United Nations sponsored Council, was postponed to 21 March. On the other hand, an Afghan official said that the new March 21 deadline, for President Rabbani to cede power, would have to be extended if the political and social conditions in the country warranted it.

MARCH

Mehmood Mestiri arrived back in Islamabad to resume his peace mission in Afghanistan.

President Rabbani arrived in Pakistan to attend the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) summit in Islamabad. Talking to newsmen, he said that his Defence Minister, Ahmad Shah Masood had decided to crush all opposition forces posing danger to Kabul's security. He also held talks with Pakistan's Prime Minister.

The Taliban captured the strategic town of Dilaram in Farah Province and took control of Nimroz Province.

Abdul Ali Mazari, leader of the Shi'ite Hezb-i-Wahdat and his nine companions, who had been captured by the Taliban, were killed while being flown by helicopter from Charasyab to Kandahar.

Forces loyal to President Rabbani, pushed the Taliban back and took control of Charasyab, 25 km south of Kabul.

APRIL

UNOCHA opened a new demining training camp in Jalalabad, following the closure of its demining camp in Risalpur, Pakistan which was established in 1989.

Afghan Ministry of Public Health (MOPH) with the collaboration of WHO and UNICEF, started a mass campaign against polio throughout Afghanistan.

The Taliban took complete control of Badghis Province. However, it was later reported that commander Ismail Khan's forces pushed the Taliban back some 60 km.

Mohammad Karim Khalili was elected as the new leader of Hezb-i-Wahdat, replacing the deceased leader, Abdul Ali Mazari.

MAY

A senior Iranian official said that Iran would begin to repatriate 400,000 Afghan refugees who had fled the violence in Afghanistan.

United Nations received contributions of US$6.2 million from a number of countries for relief projects in Afghanistan.

Pakistan's Federal Government sanctioned funds of Rs.91 million to the Afghan Commissionerate, NWFP, for the year 1995-96 to continue its work. UNHCR and other donor agencies are to completely stop aid assistance to the Afghan refugees in Pakistan by September this year.

President Rabbani's forces recaptured Farah and Nimroz Provinces from the Taliban and penetrated into Ghor Province.

Pakistan's Foreign Office sources said that Pakistan reopened its mission in Kabul and its Ambassador reached Kabul along with 30 diplomatic staff.

JUNE

A Donors Conference entitled "Briefing of Donors on Afghanistan, Longer-Term Rehabilitation Assistance and its Relationship with Humanitarian Programmes" was held in Stockholm, Sweden 1-2 June. It was organized by the UNDP and hosted by the Government of Sweden.

Forces of President Rabbani and Akbari's Hezb-i-Wahdat recaptured Bamyan Province defeating Khalili's Hezb-i-Wahdat.

US ambassador to Pakistan, John Monjo, accompanied by a few American diplomats flew to Jalalabad and Kabul. They met Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and President Rabbani and discussed a number of issues concerning Afghanistan and the UN peace process.

For the first time, a representative of the former Afghan king Zahir Shah arrived in Pakistan to meet various Afghan leaders, community elders and Afghan refugees.

JULY

The European Commission announced new humanitarian aid of 6.66 million ECU (equivalent to about Rs.275 million) for the relief of the suffering people in Kabul. Similarly, Britain provided Rs.13.75 million to the demining programme of the British mine clearance NGO, Halo Trust. It had also contributed Rs.50 million to UNOCHA's demining programme.

UN asked about 300,000 displaced people in Jalalabad to leave for Kabul, as the assistance was to be stopped by the end of September.

Mehmood Mestiri, arrived in Islamabad, to resume his peace mission in Afghanistan. He met OIC Ambassador, and various Afghan leaders in Pakistan as well as in Afghanistan.

In its annual report, Amnesty International reported serious human rights deficiencies in Afghanistan including mass murder, torture, rape of women and children, arbitrary arrests and detention of political opponents and unarmed civilians by various armed groups.

Cholera struck some parts of Afghanistan killing 97 persons in Badakhshan Province and an unspecified number in Ghazni and Paktika.

AUGUST

Using their air power for the first time, the Taliban forced two cargo planes of Tatar and Ariana airlines to land at Kandahar.

A diplomat from the Russian Embassy in Islamabad went to Kandahar, to seek the release of 7 crew members of the Albanian plane. The Taliban, demanded that Moscow should provide information about those intellectuals, mujahideen, and Ulema still missing from the Afghan war, before they release the crew of the cargo plane.

President Rabbani's forces recaptured Dilaram district in Farah Province.

Turkey reopened its Embassy in Kabul after a lapse of two and half years.

SEPTEMBER

The World Food Programme (WFP) said that it would terminate its General Feeding Programme for more than 1.2 million Afghan refugees in Pakistan on 30 September. However, WFP would implement a safety-net programme for vulnerable groups of refugees.

The Taliban recaptured Farah, Helmand, and Nimroz Provinces from President Rabbani's forces. They also captured Shindand military base. Simultaneously, the Taliban captured Herat and Ghor Provinces.

More than 1,000 demonstrators attacked the Pakistan Embassy in Kabul, killing at least two people. Pakistan evacuated the entire personnel of its Embassy closing down its mission in Kabul. In another development, Pakistan declared 13 Afghan diplomats, including the Charge d'Affaires of the Afghan Embassy in Islamabad, as *persona non grata* and asked them to leave the country.

OCTOBER

A high level United Nations official, Peter Hansen, arrived in Islamabad to study Pakistan's request to restart humanitarian assistance for Afghan refugees, which was terminated on 30 September. He went to Kabul as part of an Afghan tour, prior to the launching of the 1995-96 aid appeal.

The European Commission committed ECU 9 million (approx. Rs.361 million) to UNHCR to assist Afghan refugees returning to Afghanistan.

The Taliban were poised for an attack on Kabul after they took the nearby strategic town of Charasyab, 25 km south of Kabul in a sudden assault.

Pakistan, ordered the immediate expulsion of Masood Khalili, a close aide and special envoy of Afghan President Rabbani. It also declared another group of 17 Afghan diplomats, staff members and other nationals *as persona non grata* and asked them to leave Pakistan.

NOVEMBER

UNICEF announced that it was suspending aid for education programmes in the Taliban-controlled areas of Afghanistan, where schools for girls were being closed.

The US Assistant Secretary of State for South Asian affairs, Ms. Robin Raphel, after holding talks with Pakistani Officials in Islamabad, flew to Afghanistan for talks with Afghan factions, groups, and individuals to find a negotiated settlement of the Afghan crisis.

The Taliban captured the strategically important Pul-e-Charkhi, east of Kabul, and effectively took control of the only eastern supply route for the city. However, a week later, Afghan Government troops, recaptured 20 km of lost ground (Butkhak, Pul-e-Charkhi, Band-e-Ghazi, and Khurd Kabul) from the Taliban.

DECEMBER

The Pakistan Government told 11 French members of MADERA, a French organization working to resettle refugees in rural areas, to leave Pakistan by 11 December 1995. However, it was later reported that Pakistan's Government on advice from the foreign office revised its earlier orders and allowed the 11 members of MADERA to remain in Pakistan until 27 December 1995.

Charles A. MacFadden, the Executive Director of Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief (ACBAR) called on the NWFP Governor, Khurshid Ali Khan, in Peshawar. He discussed matters pertaining to aid institutions with the Governor.

Red Cross officials in Kabul said the food and fuel prices were beyond the reach of almost 70 per cent of the population in Kabul and without help from abroad thousands of people might not survive the winter.

Pakistan declared the Afghan Consul General in Peshawar as *persona non grata* and asked him to leave Pakistan.

CONTENTS

Aid and Economic Developments 1

Military Developments 8

Political Developments 20

Security Matters 39

Other News 46